

Characters

- Dodge: *in his seventies*
- Halie: *his wife Mid-sixties*
- Tilden: *their oldest son*
- Bradley: *their next oldest son, an amputee*
- Vince: *Tilden's son*
- Shelly: *Vince's girl friend*
- Father Dewis: *a Protestant minister*

Act 1

ACT ONE

SCENE: *Day. Old wooden staircase down left with pale, frayed carpet laid down on the steps. The stairs lead off stage left up into the wings with no landing. Up right is an old, dark green sofa with the stuffing coming out in spots. Stage right of the sofa is an upright lamp with a faded yellow shade and a small night table with several small bottles of pills on it. Down right of the sofa, with the screen facing the sofa, is a large, old-fashioned brown T.V. A flickering blue light comes from the screen, but no image, no sound. In the dark, the light of the lamp and the T.V. slowly brighten in the black space. The space behind the sofa, upstage, is a large, screened-in porch with a board floor. A solid interior door to stage right of the sofa, leading into the room on stage; and another screen door up left, leading from the porch to the outside. Beyond that are the shapes of dark elm trees.*

Gradually the form of DODGE is made out, sitting on the couch, facing the T.V., the blue light flickering on his face. He wears a well-worn T-shirt, suspenders, khaki work pants and brown slippers. He's covered himself in an old brown blanket. He's very thin and sickly looking, in his late seventies. He just stares at the T.V. More light fills the stage softly. The sound of light rain. DODGE slowly tilts his head back and stares at the ceiling for a while, listening to the rain. He lowers his head again and stares at the T.V. He turns his head slowly to the left and stares at the cushion of the sofa next to the one he's sitting on. He pulls his left arm out from under the blanket, slides his hand under the cushion, and pulls out a bottle of whiskey. He looks down left toward the staircase, listens, then uncaps the bottle, takes along swig and caps it again. He puts the bottle back under the cushion and stares at the T.V. He starts to cough slowly and softly. The coughing gradually builds. He holds one hand to his mouth and tries to stifle it. The coughing gets louder, then suddenly stops when he hears the sound of his wife's voice coming from the top of the staircase.

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge?

(DODGE just stares at the T.V. Long pause. He stifles two short coughs.)

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge! You want a pill, Dodge?

(He doesn't answer. Takes the bottle out again and takes another long swig. Puts the bottle back, stares at T`V`, pulls blanket up around his neck.)

HALIE'S VOICE

You know what it is, don't you? It's the rain! Weather. That's it. Every time. Every time you get like this, it's the rain. No sooner does the rain start then you start.

(pause)

Dodge?

(He makes no reply. Pulls a pack of cigarettes out from his sweater and lights one. Stares at T`V` pause.)

HALIE'S VOICE

You should see it coming down up here. Just coming down in sheets. Blue sheets. The bridge is pretty near flooded. What's it like down there? Dodge?

(DODGE turns his head back over his left shoulder and takes a look out through the porch. He turns back to the T`V`)

DODGE

(to himself)

Catastrophic.

HALIE'S VOICE

What? What'd you say, Dodge?

DODGE

(louder)

It looks like rain to me! Plain old rain!

HALIE'S VOICE

Rain? Of course it's rain! Are you having a seizure or something! Dodge?

(pause)

I'm coming down there in about five minutes if you don't answer me!

DODGE

Don't come down.

HALIE'S VOICE

What!

DODGE

(*louder*)

Don't come down!

(*He has another coughing attack. Stops.*)

HALIE'S VOICE

You should take a pill for that! I don't see why

you just don't take a pill. Be done with it once and for all. Put a stop to it.

(*He takes bottle out again. Another swig. Returns bottle.*)

HALIE'S VOICE

It's not Christian, but it works. It's not necessarily Christian, that is. We don't know. There's some things the ministers can't even answer. I, personally, can't see anything wrong with it. Pain is pain. Pure and simple. Suffering is a different matter. That's entirely different. A pill seems as good an answer as any. Dodge?

(*pause*)

Dodge, are you watching baseball?

DODGE

No.

HALIE'S VOICE

What?

DODGE

(*louder*)

No!

HALIE'S VOICE

What're you watching? You shouldn't be watching anything that'll get you excited! No horse racing!

DODGE

They don't race on Sundays.

HALIE'S VOICE

What?

DODGE

(*louder*)

They don't race on Sundays!

HALIE'S VOICE

Well they shouldn't race on Sundays.

DODGE

Well they don't!

HALIE'S VOICE

Good. I'm amazed they still have that kind of legislation. That's amazing.

DODGE

Yeah, it's amazing.

HALIE'S VOICE

What?

DODGE

(*louder*)

It is amazing!

HALIE'S VOICE

It is. It truly is. I would've thought these days they'd be racing on Christmas even. A big flashing Christmas tree right down at the finish line.

DODGE

(*shakes his head*)

No.

HALIE'S VOICE

They used to race on New Year's! I remember that.

DODGE

They never raced on New Year's!

HALIE'S VOICE

Sometimes they did.

DODGE

They never did!

HALIE'S VOICE

Before we were married they did!

(DODGE waves his hand in disgust at the staircase. Leans back in sofa. Stares at TV.)

HALIE'S VOICE

I went once. With a man.

DODGE

(mimicking her)

Oh, a "man."

HALIE'S VOICE

What?

DODGE

Nothing!

HALIE'S VOICE

A wonderful man. A breeder.

DODGE

A what?

HALIE'S VOICE

A breeder! A horse breeder! Thoroughbreds.

DODGE

Oh, Thoroughbreds. Wonderful.

HALIE'S VOICE

That's right. He knew everything there was to know.

DODGE

I bet he taught you a thing or two huh? Gave you a good turn around the old stable!

HALIE'S VOICE

Knew everything there was to know about horses. We won bookoos of money that day.

DODGE

What?

HALIE'S VOICE

Money! We won every race I think.

DODGE

Bookoos?

HALIE'S VOICE

Every single race.

DODGE

Bookoos of money?

HALIE'S VOICE

It was one of those kind of days.

DODGE

New Year's!

HALIE'S VOICE

Yes! It might've been Florida. Or California! One of those two.

DODGE

Can I take my pick?

HALIE'S VOICE

It was Florida!

DODGE

Aha!

HALIE'S VOICE

Wonderful! Absolutely wonderful! The sun was just gleaming. Flamingos. Bougainvilleas. Palm trees.

DODGE

(*to himself, mimicking her*)

Bougainvilleas. Palm trees.

HALIE'S VOICE

Everything was dancing with life! There were all kinds of people from everywhere. Everyone was dressed to the nines. Not like today. Not like they dress today.

DODGE

When was this anyway?

HALIE'S VOICE

This was long before I knew you.

DODGE

Must've been.

HALIE'S VOICE

Long before. I was escorted.

DODGE

To Florida?

HALIE'S VOICE

Yes. Or it might've been California. I'm not sure which.

DODGE

All that way you were escorted?

HALIE'S VOICE

Yes.

DODGE

And he never laid a finger on you I suppose?

(*long silence*)

Halie?

(*No answer. Long pause.*)

HALIE'S VOICE

Are you going out today?

DODGE

(*gesturing toward rain*)

In this?

HALIE'S VOICE

I'm just asking a simple question.

DODGE

I rarely go out in the bright sunshine, why would I go out in this?

HALIE'S VOICE

I'm just asking because I'm not doing any shopping today. And if you need anything you should ask Tilden.

DODGE

Tilden's not here!

HALIE'S VOICE

He's in the kitchen.

(DODGE *looks toward stage left, then back toward T.V.*)

DODGE

All right.

HALIE'S VOICE

What?

DODGE

(*louder*)

All right!

HALIE'S VOICE

Don't scream. It'll only get your coughing started.

DODGE

All right.

HALIE'S VOICE

Just tell Tilden what you want and he'll get it.

(*pause*)

Bradley should be over later.

DODGE

Bradley?

HALIE'S VOICE

Yes. To cut your hair.

DODGE

My hair? I don't need my hair cut!

HALIE'S VOICE

It won't hurt!

DODGE

I don't need it!

HALIE'S VOICE

It's been more than two weeks Dodge.

DODGE

I don't need it!

HALIE'S VOICE

I have to meet Father Dewis for lunch.

DODGE

You tell Bradley that if he shows up here with those clippers, I'll kill him!

HALIE'S VOICE

I won't be very late. No later than four at the very latest.

DODGE

You tell him! Last time he left me almost bald! And I wasn't even awake! I was sleeping! I woke up and he'd already left!

HALIE'S VOICE

That's not my fault!

DODGE

You put him up to it!

HALIE'S VOICE

I never did!

DODGE

You did too! You had some fancy, stupid meeting planned! Time to dress up the corpse for company! Lower the ears a little! Put up a little front! Surprised you didn't

tape a pipe to my mouth while you were at it! That woulda' looked nice! Huh? A pipe? Maybe a bowler hat! Maybe a copy of The Wall Street Journal casually placed on my lap!

HALIE'S VOICE

You always imagine the worst things of people!

DODGE

That's not the worst! That's the least of the worst!

HALIE'S VOICE

I don't need to hear it! All day long I hear things like that and I don't need to hear more.

DODGE

You better tell him!

HALIE'S VOICE

You tell him yourself! He's your own son. You should be able to talk to your own son.

DODGE

Not while I'm sleeping! He cut my hair while I was sleeping!

HALIE'S VOICE

Well he won't do it again.

DODGE

There's no guarantee.

HALIE'S VOICE

I promise he won't do it without your consent.

DODGE

(*after pause*)

There's no reason for him to even come over here.

HALIE'S VOICE

He feels responsible.

DODGE

For my hair?

HALIE'S VOICE

For your appearance.

DODGE

My appearance is out of his domain! It's even out of mine! In fact, it's disappeared! I'm an invisible man!

HALIE'S VOICE

Don't be ridiculous.

DODGE

He better not try it. That's all I've got to say.

HALIE'S VOICE

Tilden will watch out for you.

DODGE

Tilden won't protect me from Bradley!

HALIE'S VOICE

Tilden's the oldest. He'll protect you.

DODGE

Tilden can't even protect himself!

HALIE'S VOICE

Not so loud! He'll hear you. He's right in the kitchen.

DODGE

(yelling off left)

Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge, what are you trying to do?

DODGE

(yelling off left)

Tilden, get in here!

HALIE'S VOICE

Why do you enjoy stirring things up?

DODGE

I don't enjoy anything!

HALIE'S VOICE

That's a terrible thing to say.

DODGE

Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE

That's the kind of statement that leads people right to the end of their rope.

DODGE

Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE

It's no wonder people turn to Christ!

DODGE

TILDEN!!

HALIE'S VOICE

It's no wonder the messengers of God's word are shouted down in public places!

DODGE

TILDEN!!!!

(DODGE goes into a violent, spasmodic coughing attack as TILDEN enters from stage left, his arms loaded with fresh ears of corn. TILDEN is DODGE'S oldest son, late forties, wears heavy construction boots, covered with mud, dark green work pants, a plaid shirt and a faded brown windbreaker. He has a butch haircut, wet from the rain. Something about him is profoundly burned out and displaced. He stops center stage with the ears of corn in his arms and just stares at DODGE until he slowly finishes his coughing attack. DODGE looks up at him slowly. He stares at the corn. Long pause as they watch each other.)

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge, if you don't take that pill nobody's going to force you.

(The two men ignore the voice.)

DODGE

(to TILDEN)

Where'd you get that?

TILDEN

Picked it.

DODGE

You picked all that?

(TILDEN *nods.*)

DODGE

You expecting company?

TILDEN

No.

DODGE

Where'd you pick it from?

TILDEN

Right out back.

DODGE

Out back where?

TILDEN

Right out in back.

DODGE

There's nothing out there!

TILDEN

There's corn.

DODGE

There hasn't been corn out there since about nineteen thirty-five! That's the last time I planted corn out there!

TILDEN

It's out there now.

DODGE

(*yelling at stairs*)

Halie!

HALIE'S VOICE

Yes dear!

DODGE

Tilden's brought a whole bunch of corn in here! There's no corn out in back is there?

TILDEN

(*to himself*)

There's tons of corn.

HALIE'S VOICE

Not that I know of!

DODGE

That's what I thought.

HALIE'S VOICE

Not since about nineteen thirty-five!

DODGE

(*to TILDEN*)

That's right. Nineteen thirty-five.

TILDEN

It's out there now.

DODGE

You go and take that corn back to wherever you got it from!

TILDEN

(*After pause, staring at DODGE*)

It's picked. I picked it all in the rain. Once it's picked you can't put it back.

DODGE

I haven't had trouble with neighbors here for fifty-seven years. I don't even know who the neighbors are! And I don't wanna know! Now go put that corn back where it came from!

(TILDEN stares at DODGE then walks slowly over to him and dumps all the corn on DODGE'S lap and steps back. DODGE stares at the corn then back to TILDEN. Long pause.)

DODGE

Are you having trouble here, Tilden! Are you in some kind of trouble?

TILDEN

I'm not in any trouble.

DODGE

You can tell me if you are. I'm still your father.

TILDEN

I know you're still my father.

DODGE

I know you had a little trouble back in New Mexico. That's why you came out here.

TILDEN

I never had any trouble.

DODGE

Tilden, your mother told me all about it.

TILDEN

What'd she tell you?

(TILDEN pulls some chewing tobacco out of his jacket and bites off a plug.)

DODGE

I don't have to repeat what she told me! She told me all about it!

TILDEN

Can I bring my chair in from the kitchen?

DODGE

What?

TILDEN

Can I bring in my chair from the kitchen?

DODGE

Sure. Bring your chair in.

(TILDEN exits left. DODGE pushes all the corn off his lap onto the floor. He pulls the blanket off angrily and tosses it at one end of the sofa, pulls out the bottle and takes another swig. TILDEN enters again from left with a milking stool and a pail. DODGE hides the bottle quickly under the cushion before TILDEN sees it. TILDEN sets the stool down by the sofa, sits on it, puts the pail in front of [...] on

the floor. TILDEN starts picking up the ears of corn one at a time and husking them. He throws the husks and silk in the center of the stage and drops the ears into the pail each time he cleans one. He repeats this process as they talk.)

DODGE

(after pause)

Sure is nice-looking corn.

TILDEN

It's the best.

DODGE

Hybrid?

TILDEN

What?

DODGE

Some kinda fancy hybrid?

TILDEN

You planted it. I don't know what it is.

DODGE

(pause)

Tilden, look, you can't stay here forever. You know that, don't you?

TILDEN

(spits in spittoon)

I'm not.

DODGE

I know you're not. I'm not worried about that. That's not the reason I brought it up.

TILDEN

What's the reason?

DODGE

The reason is I'm wondering what you're gonna do.

TILDEN

You're not worried about me, are you?

DODGE

I'm not worried about you.

TILDEN

You weren't worried about me when I wasn't here. When I was in New Mexico.

DODGE

No, I wasn't worried about you then either.

TILDEN

You shoulda worried about me then.

DODGE

Why's that? You didn't do anything down there, did you?

TILDEN

I didn't do anything.

DODGE

Then why should I have worried about you?

TILDEN

Because I was lonely.

DODGE

Because you were lonely?

TILDEN

Yeah. I was more lonely than I've ever been before.

DODGE

Why was that?

TILDEN

(*pause*)

Could I have some of that whiskey you've got?

DODGE

What whiskey? I haven't got any whiskey.

TILDEN

You've got some under the sofa.

DODGE

I haven't got anything under the sofa! Now mind your own damn business! Jesus God, you come into the house outa the middle of nowhere, haven't heard or seen you in twenty years and suddenly you're making accusations.

TILDEN

I'm not making accusations.

DODGE

You're accusing me of hoarding whiskey under the sofa!

TILDEN

I'm not accusing you.

DODGE

You just got through telling me I had whiskey under the sofa!

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge?

DODGE

(*to* TILDEN)

Now she knows about it!

TILDEN

She doesn't know about it.

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge, are you talking to yourself down there?

DODGE

I'm talking to Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE

Tilden's down there?

DODGE

He's right here!

HALIE'S VOICE

What?

DODGE

(*louder*)

He's right here!

HALIE'S VOICE

What's he doing?

DODGE

(*to TILDEN*)

Don't answer her.

TILDEN

(*to DODGE*)

I'm not doing anything wrong.

DODGE

I know you're not.

HALIE'S VOICE

What's he doing down there!

DODGE

(*to TILDEN*)

Don't answer.

TILDEN

I'm not.

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge!

(*The men sit in silence. DODGE lights a cigarette. TILDEN keeps husking corn, spits tobacco now and then in spittoon.*)

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge! He's not drinking anything, is he? You see to it that he doesn't drink anything! You've gotta watch out for him. It's our responsibility. He can't look after himself anymore, so we have to do it. Nobody else will do it. We can't just send him away somewhere. If we had lots of money we could send him away. But we don't. We never will. That's why we have to stay healthy. You and me. Nobody's going to look after us. Bradley can't look after us. Bradley can hardly look after himself. I was always hoping that Tilden would look out for Bradley when they got older. After Bradley lost his leg. Tilden's the oldest. I always thought he'd be the one to take responsibility. I had no idea in the world that Tilden would be so much trouble. Who would've dreamed. Tilden was an All-American, don't forget. Don't forget that. Fullback. Or quarterback. I forget which.

TILDEN

(*to himself*)

Fullback.

(*still husking*)

HALIE'S VOICE

Then when Tilden turned out to be so much trouble, I put all my hopes on Ansel. Of course Ansel wasn't as handsome, but he was smart. He was the smartest probably. I think he probably was. Smarter than Bradley, that's for sure. Didn't go and chop his leg off with a chain saw. Smart enough not to go and do that. I think he was smarter than Tilden too. Especially after Tilden got in all that trouble. Doesn't take brains to go to jail. Anybody knows that. Course then when Ansel died that left us all alone. Same as being alone. No different. Same as if they'd all died. He was the smartest. He could've earned lots of money. Lots and lots of money.

(*HALIE enters slowly from the top of the staircase as she continues talking. Just her feet are seen at first as she makes her way down the stairs, a step at a time. She appears dressed completely in black, as though in mourning. Black handbag, hat with a veil, and pulling on elbow length black gloves. She is about sixty-five with pure white hair. She remains absorbed in what she's saying as she descends the stairs and doesn't really notice the two men who continue sitting there as they were before she came down, smoking and husking.*)

HALIE

He would've took care of us, too. He would've seen to it that we were repaid. He was like that. He was a hero. Don't forget that. A genuine hero. Brave. Strong. And very intelligent. Ansel could've been a great man. One of the greatest. I only regret that he didn't die in action. It's not fitting for a man like that to die in a motel room. A soldier. He could've won a medal. He could've been decorated for valor. I've talked to Father Dewis

about putting up a plaque for Ansel. He thinks it's a good idea. He agrees. He knew Ansel when he used to play basketball. Went to every game. Ansel was his favorite player. He even recommended to the City Council that they put up a statue of Ansel. A big, tall statue with a basketball in one hand and a rifle in the other. That's how much he thinks of Ansel.

(HALIE reaches the stage and begins to wander around, still absorbed in pulling on her gloves, brushing lint off her dress and continuously talking to herself as the men just sit.)

HALIE

Of course, he'd still be alive today if he hadn't married into the Catholics. The Mob. How in the world he never opened his eyes to that is beyond me. Just beyond me. Everyone around him could see the truth. Even Tilden.

Tilden told him time and again. Catholic women are the Devil incarnate. He wouldn't listen. He was blind with love. Blind. I knew. Everyone knew. The wedding was more like a funeral. You remember? All those Italians. All that horrible black, greasy hair. The smell of cheap cologne. I think even the priest was wearing a pistol. When he gave her the ring I knew he was a dead man. I knew it. As soon as he gave her the ring. But then it was the honeymoon that killed him. The honeymoon. I knew he'd never come back from the honeymoon. I kissed him and he felt like a corpse. All white. Cold. Icy blue lips. He never used to kiss like that. Never before. I knew then that she'd cursed him. Taken his soul. I saw it in her eyes. She smiled at me with that Catholic sneer of hers. She told me with her eyes that she'd murder him in his bed. Murder my son. She told me. And there was nothing I could do. Absolutely nothing. He was going with her, thinking he was free. Thinking it was love. What could I do? I couldn't tell him she was a witch. I couldn't tell him that. He'd have turned on me. Hated me. I couldn't stand him hating me and then dying before he ever saw me again. Hating me in his death bed. Hating me and loving her! How could I do that? I had to let him go. I had to. I watched him leave. I watched him throw gardenias as he helped her into the limousine. I watched his face disappear behind the glass.

(She stops abruptly and stares at the corn husks. She looks around the space as though just waking up. She turns and looks hard at TILDEN and DODGE who continue sitting calmly. She looks again at the corn husks.)

HALIE

(pointing to the husks)

What's this in my house!

(kicks husks)

What's all this!

(TILDEN stops husking and stares at her.)

HALIE

(to DODGE)

And you encourage him!

(DODGE *pulls blanket over him again.*)

DODGE

You're going out in the rain?

HALIE

It's not raining.

(TILDEN *starts husking again.*)

DODGE

Not in Florida it's not.

HALIE

We're not in Florida!

DODGE

It's not raining at the race track.

HALIE

Have you been taking those pills? Those pills always make you talk crazy. Tilden, has he been taking those pills?

TILDEN

He hasn't took anything.

HALIE

(*to DODGE*)

What've you been taking?

DODGE

It's not raining in California or Florida or the race track. Only in Illinois. This is the only place it's raining. All over the rest of the world it's bright golden sunshine.

(HALIE *goes to the night table next to the sofa and checks the bottle of pills.*)

HALIE

Which ones did you take? Tilden, you must've seen him take something.

TILDEN

He never took a thing.

HALIE

Then why's he talking crazy?

TILDEN

I've been here the whole time.

HALIE

Then you've both been taking something!

TILDEN

I've just been husking the corn.

HALIE

Where'd you get that corn anyway? Why is the house suddenly full of corn?

DODGE

Bumper crop!

HALIE

(*moving center*)

We haven't had corn here for over thirty years.

TILDEN

The whole back lot's full of corn. Far as the eye can see.

DODGE

(*to HALIE*)

Things keep happening while you're upstairs, ya know. The world doesn't stop just because you're upstairs. Corn keeps growing. Rain keeps raining.

HALIE

I'm not unaware of the world around me! Thank you very much. It so happens that I have an over-all view from the upstairs. The back yard's in plain view of my window. And there's no corn to speak of. Absolutely none!

DODGE

Tilden wouldn't lie. If he says there's corn, there's corn.

HALIE

What's the meaning of this corn Tilden!

TILDEN

It's a mystery to me. I was out in back there. And the rain was coming down. And I didn't feel like coming back inside. I didn't feel the cold so much. I didn't mind the wet. So I was just walking. I was muddy but I didn't mind the mud so much. And I looked up. And I saw this stand of corn. In fact I was standing in it. So, I was standing in it.

HALIE

There isn't any corn outside, Tilden! There's no corn! Now, you must've either stolen this corn or you bought it.

DODGE

He doesn't have any money.

HALIE

(to TILDEN)

So you stole it!

TILDEN

I didn't steal it. I don't want to get kicked out of Illinois. I was kicked out of New Mexico and I don't want to get kicked out of Illinois.

HALIE

You're going to get kicked out of this house, Tilden, if you don't tell me where you got that corn!

(TILDEN *starts crying softly to himself but keeps husking corn. Pause.*)

DODGE

(to HALIE)

Why'd you have to tell him that? Who cares where he got the corn? Why'd you have to go and tell him that?

HALIE

(to DODGE)

It's your fault you know! You're the one that's behind all this! I suppose you thought it'd be funny! Some joke! Cover the house with corn husks. You better get this cleaned up before Bradley sees it.

DODGE

Bradley's not getting in the front door!

HALIE

(kicking husks, striding back and forth)

Bradley's going to be very upset when he sees this. He doesn't like to see the house in disarray. He can't stand it when one thing is out of place. The slightest thing. You know how he gets.

DODGE

Bradley doesn't even live here!

HALIE

It's his home as much as ours. He was born in this house!

DODGE

He was born in a hog wallow.

HALIE

Don't you say that! Don't you ever say that!

DODGE

He was born in a goddamn hog wallow! That's where he was born and that's where he belongs! He doesn't belong in this house!

HALIE

(she stops)

I don't know what's come over you, Dodge. I don't know what in the world's come over you. You've become an evil man. You used to be a good man.

DODGE

Six of one, a half dozen of another.

HALIE

You sit here day and night, festering away! Decomposing! Smelling up the house with your putrid body! Hacking your head off till all hours of the morning! Thinking up mean, evil, stupid things to say about your own flesh and blood!

DODGE

He's not my flesh and blood! My flesh and blood's buried in the back yard!

(They freeze. Long pause. The men stare at her.)

HALIE

(quietly)

That's enough, Dodge. That's quite enough. I'm going out now. I'm going to have lunch with Father Dewis. I'm going to ask him about a monument. A statue. At least a plaque.

(She crosses to the door up right. She stops.)

HALIE

If you need anything, ask Tilden. He's the oldest. I've left some money on the kitchen table.

DODGE

I don't need anything.

HALIE

No, I suppose not.

(she opens the door and looks out through porch)

Still raining. I love the smell just after it stops. The ground. I won't be too late.

(She goes out door and closes it. She's still visible on the porch as she crosses toward stage left screen door. She stops in the middle of the porch, speaks to DODGE but doesn't turn to him.)

HALIE

Dodge, tell Tilden not to go out in the back lot anymore. I don't want him back there in the rain.

DODGE

You tell him. He's sitting right here.

HALIE

He never listens to me Dodge. He's never listened to me in the past.

DODGE

I'll tell him.

HALIE

We have to watch him just like we used to now. Just like we always have. He's still a child.

DODGE

I'll watch him.

HALIE

Good.

(She crosses to screen door, left, takes an umbrella off a hook and goes out the door. The door slams behind her. Long pause. TILDEN husks corn, stares at pail. DODGE lights a cigarette, stares at T.V.)

TILDEN

(still husking)

You shouldn't a told her that.

DODGE

(staring at T.V.)

What?

TILDEN

What you told her. You know.

DODGE

What do you know about it?

TILDEN

I know. I know all about it. We all know.

DODGE

So what difference does it make? Everybody knows, everybody's forgot.

TILDEN

She hasn't forgot.

DODGE

She should've forgot.

TILDEN

It's different for a woman. She couldn't forget that. How could she forget that?

DODGE

I don't want to talk about it!

TILDEN

What do you want to talk about?

DODGE

I don't want to talk about anything! I don't want to talk about troubles or what happened fifty years ago or thirty years ago or the race track or Florida or the last time I seeded the corn! I don't want to talk!

TILDEN

You don't wanna die do you?

DODGE

No, I don't wanna die either.

TILDEN

Well, you gotta talk or you'll die.

DODGE

Who told you that?

TILDEN

That's what I know. I found that out in New Mexico. I thought I was dying but I just lost my voice.

DODGE

Were you with somebody?

TILDEN

I was alone. I thought I was dead.

DODGE

Might as well have been. What'd you come back here for?

TILDEN

I didn't know where to go.

DODGE

You're a grown man. You shouldn't be needing your parents at your age. It's unnatural. There's nothing we can do for you now anyway. Couldn't you make a living down there? Couldn't you find some way to make a living? Support yourself? What'd'ya come back here for? You expect us to feed you forever?

TILDEN

I didn't know where else to go.

DODGE

I never went back to my parents. Never. Never even had the urge. I was independent. Always independent. Always found a way.

TILDEN

I didn't know what to do. I couldn't figure anything out.

DODGE

There's nothing to figure out. You just forge ahead. What's there to figure out?

(TILDEN *stands.*)

TILDEN

I don't know.

DODGE

Where are you going?

TILDEN

Out back.

DODGE

You're not supposed to go out there. You heard what she said. Don't play deaf with me!

TILDEN

I like it out there.

DODGE

In the rain?

TILDEN

Especially in the rain. I like the feeling of it. Feels like it always did.

DODGE

You're supposed to watch out for me. Get me things when I need them.

TILDEN

What do you need?

DODGE

I don't need anything! But I might. I might need something any second. Any second now. I can't be left alone for a minute!

(DODGE *starts to cough.*)

TILDEN

I'll be right outside. You can just yell.

DODGE

(*between coughs*)

No! It's too far! You can't go out there! It's too far! You might not ever hear me!

TILDEN

(*moving to pills*)

Why don't you take a pill? You want a pill?

(DODGE *coughs more violently, throws himself back against sofa, clutches his throat. TILDEN stands by helplessly.*)

DODGE

Water! Get me some water!

(TILDEN *rushes off left. DODGE reaches out for the pills, knocking some bottles to the floor; coughing in spasms. He grabs a small bottle, takes out pills and swallows them. TILDEN rushes back on with a glass of water. DODGE takes it and drinks, his coughing subsides.*)

TILDEN

You all right now?

(DODGE *nods. Drinks more water. TILDEN moves in closer to him. DODGE sets glass of water on the night table. His coughing is almost gone.*)

TILDEN

Why don't you lay down for a while? Just rest a little.

(TILDEN *helps DODGE lay down on the sofa. Covers him with blanket.*)

DODGE

You're not going outside are you?

TILDEN

No.

DODGE

I don't want to wake up and find you not here.

TILDEN

I'll be here.

(TILDEN *tucks blanket around* DODGE)

DODGE

You'll stay right here?

TILDEN

I'll stay in my chair.

DODGE

That's not a chair. That's my old milking stool.

TILDEN

I know.

DODGE

Don't call it a chair.

TILDEN

I won't.

(TILDEN *tries to take* DODGE'S *baseball cap off.*)

DODGE

What're you doing! Leave that on me! Don't take that offa me! That's my cap!

(TILDEN *leaves the cap on* DODGE)

TILDEN

I know.

DODGE

Bradley'll shave my head if I don't have that on. That's my cap.

TILDEN

I know it is.

DODGE

Don't take my cap off.

TILDEN

I won't.

DODGE

You stay right here now.

TILDEN

(*sits on stool*)

I will.

DODGE

Don't go outside. There's nothing out there.

TILDEN

I won't.

DODGE

Everything's in here. Everything you need. Money's on the table. T`V` Is the T`V` on?

TILDEN

Yeah.

DODGE

Turn it off! Turn the damn thing off! What's it doing on?

TILDEN

(*shuts off T`V`, light goes out*)

You left it on.

DODGE

Well turn it off.

TILDEN

(*sits on stool again*)

It's off.

DODGE

Leave it off.

TILDEN

I will.

DODGE

When I fall asleep you can turn it on.

TILDEN

Okay.

DODGE

You can watch the ball game. Red Sox. You like the Red Sox don't you?

TILDEN

Yeah.

DODGE

You can watch the Red Sox. Pee Wee Reese. Pee Wee Reese. You remember Pee Wee Reese?

TILDEN

No.

DODGE

Was he with the Red Sox?

TILDEN

I don't know.

DODGE

Pee Wee Reese.

(falling asleep)

You can watch the Cardinals. You remember Stan Musial.

TILDEN

No.

DODGE

Stan Musial.

(falling into sleep)

Bases loaded. Top a' the sixth. Bases loaded. Runner on first and third. Big fat knuckle ball. Floater. Big as a blimp. Cracko! Ball just took off like a rocket. Just pulverized. I marked it. Marked it with my eyes. Straight between the clock and the Burma Shave ad. I was the first kid out there. First kid. I had to fight hard for that ball. I wouldn't give it up. They almost tore the ears right off me. But I wouldn't give it up.

(DODGE falls into deep sleep. TILDEN just sits staring at him for a while. Slowly he leans toward the sofa, checking to see if DODGE is well asleep. He reaches slowly under the cushion and pulls out the bottle of booze. DODGE sleeps soundly. TILDEN stands quietly, staring at DODGE as he uncaps the bottle and takes a long drink. He caps the bottle and sticks it in his hip pocket. He looks around at the husks on the floor and then back to DODGE. He moves center stage and gathers an armload of corn husks then crosses back to the sofa. He stands holding the husks over DODGE and looking down at him he gently spreads the corn husks over the whole length of DODGE'S body. He stands back and looks at DODGE. Pulls out bottle, takes another drink, returns bottle to his hip pocket. He gathers more husks and repeats the procedure until the floor is clean of corn husks and DODGE is completely covered in them except for his head. TILDEN takes another long drink, stares at DODGE sleeping then quietly exits stage left. Long pause as the sound of rain continues. DODGE sleeps on. The figure of BRADLEY appears up left, outside the screen porch door. He holds a wet newspaper over his head as a protection from the rain. He seems to be struggling with the door then slips and almost falls to the ground. DODGE sleeps on, undisturbed.)

BRADLEY

Sonuvabitch! Sonuvagoddamnitch!

(BRADLEY recovers his footing and makes it through the screen door onto the porch. He throws the newspaper down, shakes the water out of his hair, and brushes the rain off of his shoulders. He is a big man dressed in a gray sweat shirt, black suspenders, baggy dark blue pants and black janitor's shoes. His left leg is wooden, having been amputated above the knee. He moves with an exaggerated, almost

mechanical limp. The squeaking sounds of leather and metal accompany his walk coming from the harness and hinges of the false leg. His arms and shoulders are extremely powerful and muscular due to a lifetime dependency on the upper torso doing all the work for the legs. He is about five years younger than TILDEN. He moves laboriously to the stage right door and enters, closing the door behind him. He doesn't notice DODGE at first. He moves toward the staircase.)

BRADLEY

(calling to upstairs)

Mom!

(He stops and listens. Turns upstage and sees DODGE sleeping. Notices corn husks. He moves slowly toward sofa. Stops next to pail and looks into it. Looks at husks. DODGE stays asleep. Talks to himself.)

BRADLEY

What in the hell is this?

(He looks at DODGE'S sleeping face and shakes his head in disgust. He pulls out a pair of black electric hair clippers from his pocket. Unwinds the cord and crosses to the lamp. He jabs his wooden leg behind the knee, causing it to bend at the joint and awkwardly kneels to plug the cord into a floor outlet. He pulls himself to his feet again by using the sofa as leverage. He moves to DODGE'S head and again jabs his false leg. Goes down on one knee. He violently knocks away some of the corn husks then jerks off DODGE'S baseball cap and throws it down center stage. DODGE stays asleep. BRADLEY switches on the clippers. Lights start dimming. BRADLEY cuts DODGE'S hair while he sleeps. Lights dim slowly to black with the sound of clippers and rain.)

Act 2**ACT TWO**

SCENE: *Same set as act 1. Night. Sounds of rain. DODGE still asleep on sofa. His hair is cut extremely short and in places the scalp is cut and bleeding. His cap is still center stage. All the corn and husks, pail and milking stool have been cleared away. The lights come up to the sound of a young girl laughing off stage left. DODGE remains asleep. SHELLY and VINCE appear up left outside the screen porch door sharing the shelter of VINCE'S overcoat above their heads. SHELLY is about nineteen, black hair, very beautiful. She wears tight jeans, high heels, purple T-shirt and a short rabbit fur coat. Her makeup is exaggerated and her hair has been curled. VINCE is TILDEN'S son, about twenty-two, wears a plaid shirt, jeans, dark glasses, cowboy boots and carries a black saxophone case. They shake the rain off themselves as they enter the porch through the screen door.*

SHELLY

(*laughing, gesturing to house*)

This is it? I don't believe this is it!

VINCE

This is it.

SHELLY

This is the house?

VINCE

This is the house.

SHELLY

I don't believe it!

VINCE

How come?

SHELLY

It's like a Norman Rockwell cover or something.

VINCE

What's a' matter with that? It's American.

SHELLY

Where's the milkman and the little dog? What's the little dog's name? Spot. Spot and Jane. Dick and Jane and Spot.

VINCE

Knock it off.

SHELLY

Dick and Jane and Spot and Mom and Dad and Junior and Sissy!

(*She laughs. Slaps her knee.*)

VINCE

Come on! It's my heritage. What dya' expect?

(*She laughs more hysterically, out of control.*)

SHELLY

"And Tuffy and Toto and Dooda and Bonzo all went down one day to the corner grocery store to buy a big bag of licorice for Mr' Marshall's pussy cat!"

(*She laughs so hard she falls to her knees holding her stomach. VINCE stands there looking at her.*)

VINCE

Shelly will you get up!

(*She keeps laughing. Staggers to her feet. Turning in circles holding her stomach.*)

SHELLY

(*continuing her story in kid's voice*)

"Mr' Marshall was on vacation. He had no idea that the four little boys had taken such a liking to his little kitty cat."

VINCE

Have some respect would ya'!

SHELLY

(*trying to control herself*)

I'm sorry.

VINCE

Pull yourself together.

SHELLY

(*salutes him*)

Yes sir.

(*She giggles.*)

VINCE

Jesus Christ, Shelly.

SHELLY

(*pause, smiling*)

And Mr' Marshall —

VINCE

Cut it out.

(*She stops. Stands there staring at him. Stifles a giggle.*)

VINCE

(*after pause*)

Are you finished?

SHELLY

Oh brother!

VINCE

I don't wanna go in there with you acting like an idiot.

SHELLY

Thanks.

VINCE

Well, I don't.

SHELLY

I won't embarrass you. Don't worry.

VINCE

I'm not worried.

SHELLY

You are too.

VINCE

Shelly look, I just don't wanna go in there with you giggling your head off. They might think something's wrong with you.

SHELLY

There is.

VINCE

There is not!

SHELLY

Something's definitely wrong with me.

VINCE

There is not!

SHELLY

There's something wrong with you too.

VINCE

There's nothing wrong with me either!

SHELLY

You wanna know what's wrong with you?

VINCE

What?

(SHELLY *laughs.*)

VINCE

(*crosses back left toward screen door*)

I'm leaving!

SHELLY

(*stops laughing*)

Wait! Stop! Stop!

(VINCE *stops*)

What's wrong with you is that you take the situation too seriously.

VINCE

I just don't want to have them think that I've suddenly arrived out of the middle of nowhere completely deranged.

SHELLY

What do you want them to think then?

VINCE

(pause)

Nothing. Let's go in.

(He crosses porch toward stage right interior door. SHELLY follows him. The stage right door opens slowly. VINCE sticks his head in, doesn't notice DODGE sleeping. Calls out toward staircase.)

VINCE

Grandma!

(SHELLY breaks into laughter, unseen behind VINCE. VINCE pulls his head back outside and pulls door shut. We hear their voices again without seeing them.)

SHELLY'S VOICE

(stops laughing)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry Vince. I really am. I really am sorry. I won't do it again. I couldn't help it.

VINCE'S VOICE

It's not all that funny.

SHELLY'S VOICE

I know it's not. I'm sorry.

VINCE'S VOICE

I mean this is a tense situation for me! I haven't seen them for over six years. I don't know what to expect.

SHELLY'S VOICE

I know. I won't do it again.

VINCE'S VOICE

Can't you bite your tongue or something?

SHELLY'S VOICE

Just don't say "Grandma," okay?

(*she giggles, stops*)

I mean if you say "Grandma" I don't know if I can stop myself.

VINCE'S VOICE

Well try!

SHELLY'S VOICE

Okay. Sorry.

(*Door opens again. VINCE sticks his head in then enters. SHELLY follows behind him. VINCE crosses to staircase, sets down saxophone*

case and overcoat, looks up staircase. SHELLY notices DODGE'S baseball cap. Crosses to it. Picks it up and puts it on her head. VINCE goes up the stairs and disappears at the top. SHELLY watches him then turns and sees DODGE on the sofa. She takes off the baseball cap.)

VINCE'S VOICE

(*from above stairs*)

Grandma!

(*SHELLY crosses over to DODGE slowly and stands next to him. She stands at his head, reaches out slowly and touches one of the cuts. The second she touches his head, DODGE jerks up to a sitting position on the sofa, eyes open. SHELLY gasps. DODGE looks at her, sees his cap in her hands, quickly puts his hand to his bare head. He glares at SHELLY then whips the cap out of her hands and puts it on. SHELLY backs away from him. DODGE stares at her.*)

SHELLY

I'm uh — with Vince.

(*DODGE just glares at her.*)

SHELLY

He's upstairs.

(*DODGE looks at the staircase then back to SHELLY.*)

SHELLY

(*calling upstairs*)

Vince!

VINCE'S VOICE

Just a second!

SHELLY

You better get down here!

VINCE'S VOICE

Just a minute! I'm looking at the pictures.

(DODGE *keeps staring at her.*)

SHELLY

(*to DODGE*)

We just got here. Pouring rain on the freeway so we thought we'd stop by. I mean Vince was planning on stopping anyway. He wanted to see you. He said he hadn't seen you in a long time.

(*Pause. DODGE just keeps staring at her.*)

SHELLY

We were going all the way through to New Mexico. To see his father. I guess his father lives out there. We thought we'd stop by and see you on the way. Kill two birds with one stone, you know?

(*she laughs, DODGE stares, she stops laughing*)

I mean Vince has this thing about his family now. I guess it's a new thing with him. I kind of find it hard to relate to. But he feels it's important. You know. I mean he feels he wants to get to know you all again. After all this time.

(*Pause. DODGE just stares at her. She moves nervously to staircase and yells up to VINCE.*)

SHELLY

Vince will you come down here please!

(VINCE *comes half way down the stairs.*)

VINCE

I guess they went out for a while.

(SHELLY *points to sofa and DODGE. VINCE turns and sees DODGE. He comes all the way down staircase and crosses to DODGE. SHELLY stays behind near staircase, keeping her distance.*)

VINCE

Grandpa?

(DODGE looks up at him, not recognizing him.)

DODGE

Did you bring the whiskey?

(VINCE looks back at SHELLY then back to DODGE.)

VINCE

Grandpa, it's Vince. I'm Vince. Tilden's son. You remember?

(DODGE stares at him.)

DODGE

You didn't do what you told me. You didn't stay here with me.

VINCE

Grandpa, I haven't been here until just now. I just got here.

DODGE

You left. You went outside like we told you not to do. You went out there in back. In the rain.

(VINCE looks back at SHELLY. She moves slowly toward sofa.)

SHELLY

Is he okay?

VINCE

I don't know.

(takes off his shades)

Look, Grandpa, don't you remember me? Vince. Your Grandson.

(DODGE stares at him then takes off his baseball cap.)

DODGE

(points to his head)

See what happens when you leave me alone? See that? That's what happens.

(VINCE looks at his head. VINCE reaches out to touch his head. DODGE slaps his hand away with the cap and puts it back on his head.)

VINCE

What's going on Grandpa? Where's Halie?

DODGE

Don't worry about her. She won't be back for days. She
says she'll be back but she won't be.

(he starts laughing)

There's life in the old girl yet!

(stops laughing)

VINCE

How did you do that to your head?

DODGE

I didn't do it! Don't be ridiculous!

VINCE

Well who did then?

(Pause. DODGE stares at VINCE.)

DODGE

Who do you think did it? Who do you think?

(SHELLY moves toward VINCE.)

SHELLY

Vince, maybe we oughta' go. I don't like this. I mean this isn't my idea of a good time.

VINCE

(to SHELLY)

Just a second.

(to DODGE)

Grandpa, look, I just got here. I just now got here. I haven't been here for six years. I don't know anything that's happened.

(*Pause, DODGE stares at him.*)

DODGE

You don't know anything?

VINCE

No.

DODGE

Well that's good. That's good. It's much better not to know anything. Much, much better.

VINCE

Isn't there anybody here with you?

(*DODGE turns slowly and looks off to stage left.*)

DODGE

Tilden's here.

VINCE

No, Grandpa, Tilden's in New Mexico. That's where I was going. I'm going out there to see him.

(*DODGE turns slowly back to VINCE.*)

DODGE

Tilden's here.

(*VINCE backs away and joins SHELLY. DODGE stares at them.*)

SHELLY

Vince, why don't we spend the night in a motel and come back in the morning? We could have breakfast. Maybe everything would be different.

VINCE

Don't be scared. There's nothing to be scared of. He's just old.

SHELLY

I'm not scared!

DODGE

You two are not my idea of the perfect couple!

SHELLY

(*after pause*)

Oh really? Why's that?

VINCE

Shh! Don't aggravate him.

DODGE

There's something wrong between the two of you. Something not compatible.

VINCE

Grandpa, where did Halie go? Maybe we should call her.

DODGE

What are you talking about? Do you know what you're talking about? Are you just talking for the sake of talking? Lubricating the gums?

VINCE

I'm trying to figure out what's going on here!

DODGE

Is that it?

VINCE

Yes. I mean I expected everything to be different.

DODGE

Who are you to expect anything? Who are you supposed to be?

VINCE

I'm Vince! Your Grandson!

DODGE

Vince. My Grandson.

VINCE

Tilden's son.

DODGE

Tilden's son, Vince.

VINCE

You haven't seen me for a long time.

DODGE

When was the last time?

VINCE

I don't remember.

DODGE

You don't remember?

VINCE

No.

DODGE

You don't remember. How am I supposed to remember if you don't remember?

SHELLY

Vince, come on. This isn't going to work out.

VINCE

(*to* SHELLY)

Just take it easy.

SHELLY

I'm taking it easy! He doesn't even know who you are!

VINCE

(*crossing toward* DODGE)

Grandpa, look —

DODGE

Stay where you are! Keep your distance!

(VINCE *stops. Looks back at SHELLY then to DODGE.*)

SHELLY

Vince, this is really making me nervous. I mean he doesn't even want us here. He doesn't even like us.

DODGE

She's a beautiful girl.

VINCE

Thanks.

DODGE

Very Beautiful Girl.

SHELLY

Oh my God.

DODGE

(*to SHELLY*)

What's your name?

SHELLY

Shelly.

DODGE

Shelly. That's a man's name isn't it?

SHELLY

Not in this case.

DODGE

(*to VINCE*)

She's a smart-ass too.

SHELLY

Vince! Can we go?

DODGE

She wants to go. She just got here and she wants to go.

VINCE

This is kind of strange for her.

DODGE

She'll get used to it.

(to SHELLY)

What part of the country do you come from?

SHELLY

Originally?

DODGE

That's right. Originally. At the very start.

SHELLY

L`A.

DODGE

L`A. Stupid country.

SHELLY

I can't stand this Vince! This is really unbelievable!

DODGE

It's stupid! L`A` is stupid! So is Florida! All those Sunshine States. They're all stupid. Do you know why they're stupid?

SHELLY

Illuminate me.

DODGE

I'll tell you why. Because they're full of smart-asses! That's why.

(SHELLY turns her back to DODGE, crosses to staircase and sits on bottom step.)

DODGE

(to VINCE)

Now she's insulted.

VINCE

Well you weren't very polite.

DODGE

She's insulted! Look at her! In my house she's insulted! She's over there sulking because I insulted her!

SHELLY

(to VINCE)

This is really terrific. This is wonderful. And you were worried about me making the right first impression!

DODGE

(to VINCE)

She's a fireball isn't she? Regular fireball. I had some a' them in my day. Temporary stuff. Never lasted more than a week.

VINCE

Grandpa —

DODGE

Stop calling me Grandpa will ya'! It's sickening. "Grandpa." I'm nobody's Grandpa!

(DODGE starts feeling around under the cushion for the bottle of whiskey. SHELLY gets up from the staircase.)

SHELLY

(to VINCE)

Maybe you've got the wrong house. Did you ever think of that? Maybe this is the wrong address!

VINCE

It's not the wrong address! I recognize the yard.

SHELLY

Yeah but do you recognize the people? He says he's not your Grandfather.

DODGE

(digging for bottle)

Where's that bottle!

VINCE

He's just sick or something. I don't know what's happened to him.

DODGE

Where's my goddamn bottle!

(DODGE gets up from sofa and starts tearing the cushions off it and throwing them downstage, looking for the whiskey.)

SHELLY

Can't we just drive on to New Mexico? This is terrible, Vince! I don't want to stay here. In this house. I thought it was going to be turkey dinners and apple pie and all that kinda stuff.

VINCE

Well I hate to disappoint you!

SHELLY

I'm not disappointed! I'm fuckin' terrified! I wanna' go!

(DODGE yells toward stage left.)

DODGE

Tilden! Tilden!

(DODGE keeps ripping away at the sofa looking for his bottle, he knocks over the night stand with the bottles. VINCE and SHELLY watch as he starts ripping the stuffing out of the sofa.)

VINCE

(to SHELLY)

He's lost his mind or something. I've got to try to help him.

SHELLY

You help him! I'm leaving!

(SHELLY starts to leave. VINCE grabs her. They struggle as DODGE keeps ripping away at the sofa and yelling.)

DODGE

Tilden! Tilden get your ass in here! Tilden!

SHELLY

Let go of me!

VINCE

You're not going anywhere! You're going to stay right here!

SHELLY

Let go of me you sonuvabitch! I'm not your property!

(Suddenly TILDEN walks on from stage left just as he did before. This time his arms are full of carrots. DODGE, VINCE and SHELLY stop suddenly when they see him. They all stare at TILDEN as he crosses slowly center stage with the carrots and stops. DODGE sits on sofa, exhausted.)

DODGE

(panting, to TILDEN)

Where in the hell have you been?

TILDEN

Out back.

DODGE

Where's my bottle?

TILDEN

Gone.

(TILDEN and VINCE stare at each other. SHELLY backs away.)

DODGE

(to TILDEN)

You stole my bottle!

VINCE

(to TILDEN)

Dad?

(TILDEN just stares at VINCE.)

DODGE

You had no right to steal my bottle! No right at all!

VINCE

(to TILDEN)

It's Vince. I'm Vince.

(TILDEN *stares at VINCE then looks at DODGE then turns to SHELLY.*)

TILDEN

(*after pause*)

I picked these carrots. If anybody wants any carrots, I picked 'em.

SHELLY

(*to VINCE*)

This is your father?

VINCE

(*to TILDEN*)

Dad, what're you doing here?

(TILDEN *just stares at VINCE, holding carrots, DODGE pulls the blanket back over himself.*)

DODGE

(*to TILDEN*)

You're going to have to get me another bottle! You gotta get me a bottle before Halie comes back! There's money on the table.

(*points to stage left kitchen*)

TILDEN

(*shaking his head*)

I'm not going down there. Into town.

(SHELLY *crosses to TILDEN. TILDEN stares at her.*)

SHELLY

(*to TILDEN*)

Are you Vince's father?

TILDEN

(*to SHELLY*)

Vince?

SHELLY

(*pointing to VINCE*)

This is supposed to be your son! Is he your son? Do you recognize him! I'm just along for the ride here. I thought everybody knew each other!

(TILDEN *stares at VINCE*. DODGE *wraps himself up in the blanket and sits on sofa staring at the floor.*)

TILDEN

I had a son once but we buried him.

(DODGE *quickly looks at TILDEN*. SHELLY *looks to VINCE.*)

DODGE

You shut up about that! You don't know anything about that!

VINCE

Dad, I thought you were in New Mexico. We were going to drive down there and see you.

TILDEN

Long way to drive.

DODGE

(*to TILDEN*)

You don't know anything about that! That happened before you were born! Long before!

VINCE

What's happened, Dad? What's going on here? I thought everything was all right. What's happened to Halie?

TILDEN

She left.

SHELLY

(*to TILDEN*)

Do you want me to take those carrots for you?

(TILDEN *stares at her. She moves in close to him. Holds out her arms. TILDEN stares at her arms then slowly dumps the carrots into her arms. SHELLY stands there holding the carrots.*)

TILDEN

(to SHELLY)

You like carrots?

SHELLY

Sure. I like all kinds of vegetables.

DODGE

(to TILDEN)

You gotta get me a bottle before Halie comes back!

(DODGE hits sofa with his fist. VINCE crosses up to DODGE and tries to console him. SHELLY and TILDEN stay facing each other.)

TILDEN

(to SHELLY)

Back yard's full of carrots. Corn. Potatoes.

SHELLY

You're Vince's father, right?

TILDEN

All kinds of vegetables. You like vegetables?

SHELLY

(laughs)

Yeah. I love vegetables.

TILDEN

We could cook these carrots ya' know. You could cut 'em up and we could cook 'em.

SHELLY

All right.

TILDEN

I'll get you a pail and a knife.

SHELLY

Okay.

TILDEN

I'll be right back. Don't go.

(TILDEN exits off stage left. SHELLY stands center, arms full of carrots. VINCE stands next to DODGE. SHELLY looks toward VINCE then down at the carrots.)

DODGE

(to VINCE)

You could get me a bottle.

(pointing off left)

There's money on the table.

VINCE

Grandpa why don't you lay down for a while?

DODGE

I don't wanna lay down for a while! Every time I lay down something happens!

(whips off his cap, points at his head)

Look what happens! That's what happens!

(pulls his cap back on)

You go lie down and see what happens to you! See how you like it! They'll steal your bottle! They'll cut your hair! They'll murder your children! That's what'll happen.

VINCE

Just relax for a while.

DODGE

(pause)

You could get me a bottle ya' know. There's nothing stopping you from getting me a bottle.

SHELLY

Why don't you get him a bottle, Vince? Maybe it would help everybody identify each other.

DODGE

(pointing to SHELLY)

There, see? She thinks you should get me a bottle.

(VINCE crosses to SHELLY.)

VINCE

What're you doing with those carrots.

SHELLY

I'm waiting for your father.

DODGE

She thinks you should get me a bottle!

VINCE

Shelly put the carrots down will ya'! We gotta deal with the situation here! I'm gonna need your help.

SHELLY

I'm helping.

VINCE

You're only adding to the problem! You're making things worse! Put the carrots down!

(VINCE tries to knock the carrots out of her arms. She turns away from him, protecting the carrots.)

SHELLY

Get away from me! Stop it!

(VINCE stands back from her. She turns to him still holding the carrots.)

VINCE

(to SHELLY)

Why are you doing this! Are you trying to make fun of me? This is my family you know!

SHELLY

You coulda' fooled me! I'd just as soon not be here myself. I'd just as soon be a thousand miles from here. I'd rather be anywhere but here. You're the one who wants to stay. So I'll stay. I'll stay and I'll cut the carrots. And I'll cook the carrots. And I'll do whatever I have to do to survive. Just to make it through this.

VINCE

Put the carrots down Shelly.

(TILDEN enters from left with pail, milking stool and a knife. He sets the stool and pail center stage for SHELLY. SHELLY looks at VINCE then sits down on stool, sets the carrots on the floor and takes the knife from TILDEN. She looks at VINCE again then picks up a carrot, cuts the ends off, scrapes it and drops it in

pail. She repeats this, VINCE glares at her. She smiles.)

DODGE

She could get me a bottle. She's the type a' girl that could get me a bottle. Easy. She'd go down there. Slink up to the counter. They'd probably give her two bottles for the price of one. She could do that.

(SHELLY laughs. Keeps cutting carrots. VINCE crosses up to DODGE, looks at him. TILDEN watches SHELLY'S hands. Long pause.)

VINCE

(to DODGE)

I haven't changed that much. I mean physically. Physically I'm just about the same. Same size. Same weight. Everything's the same.

(DODGE keeps staring at SHELLY while VINCE talks to him.)

DODGE

She's a beautiful girl. Exceptional.

(VINCE moves in front of DODGE to block his view of SHELLY. DODGE keeps craning his head around to see her as VINCE demonstrates tricks from his past.)

VINCE

Look. Look at this. Do you remember this? I used to bend my thumb behind my knuckles. You remember? I used to do it at the dinner table.

(VINCE bends a thumb behind his knuckles for DODGE and holds it out to him. DODGE takes a short glance then looks back at SHELLY. VINCE shifts position and shows him something else.)

VINCE

What about this?

(VINCE curls his lips back and starts drumming on his teeth with his fingernails making little tapping sounds. DODGE watches a while. TILDEN turns toward the sound. VINCE keeps it up. He sees TILDEN taking notice and crosses to TILDEN as he drums on his teeth. DODGE turns T'V' on. Watches it.)

VINCE

You remember this Dad?

(VINCE keeps on drumming for TILDEN. TILDEN watches a while, fascinated, then turns back to SHELLY. VINCE keeps up the drumming on his teeth, crosses back to DODGE doing it. SHELLY keeps working on carrots, talking to TILDEN.)

SHELLY

(to TILDEN)

He drives me crazy with that sometimes.

VINCE

(to DODGE)

I know! Here's one you'll remember. You used to kick me out of the house for this one.

(VINCE pulls his shirt out of his belt and holds it tucked under his chin with his stomach exposed. He grabs the flesh on either side of his belly button and pushes it in and out to make it look like a mouth talking. He watches his belly button and makes a deep sounding cartoon voice to synchronize with the movement. He demonstrates it

to DODGE then crosses down to TILDEN doing it. Both DODGE and TILDEN take short, uninterested glances then ignore him.)

VINCE

(deep cartoon voice)

"Hello. How are you? I'm fine. Thank you very much. It's so good to see you looking well this fine Sunday morning. I was going down to the hardware store to fetch a pail of water."

SHELLY

Vince, don't be pathetic will ya'!

(VINCE stops. Tucks his shirt back in.)

SHELLY

Jesus Christ. They're not gonna play. Can't you see that?

(SHELLY keeps cutting carrots. VINCE slowly moves toward TILDEN. TILDEN keeps watching SHELLY. DODGE watches T.V.)

VINCE

(to SHELLY)

I don't get it. I really don't get it. Maybe it's me. Maybe I forgot something.

DODGE

(from sofa)

You forgot to get me a bottle! That's what you forgot. Anybody in this house could get me a bottle. Anybody!

But nobody will. Nobody understands the urgency! Peelin' carrots is more important. Playin' piano on your teeth! Well I hope you all remember this when you get up in years. When you find yourself immobilized. Dependent on the whims of others.

(VINCE moves up toward DODGE. Pause as he looks at him.)

VINCE

I'll get you a bottle.

DODGE

You will?

VINCE

Sure.

(SHELLY stands holding knife and carrot.)

SHELLY

You're not going to leave me here are you?

VINCE

(moving to her)

You suggested it! You said, "why don't I go get him a bottle." So I'll go get him a bottle!

SHELLY

But I can't stay here.

VINCE

What is going on! A minute ago you were ready to cut carrots all night!

SHELLY

That was only if you stayed. Something to keep me busy, so I wouldn't be so nervous. I don't want to stay here alone.

DODGE

Don't let her talk you out of it! She's a bad influence. I could see it the minute she stepped in here.

SHELLY

(to DODGE)

You were asleep!

TILDEN

(to SHELLY)

Don't you want to cut carrots anymore?

SHELLY

Sure. Sure I do.

(SHELLY sits back down on stool and continues cutting carrots. Pause. VINCE moves around, stroking his hair, staring at DODGE and TILDEN. VINCE and SHELLY exchange glances. DODGE watches T.V.)

VINCE

Boy! This is amazing. This is truly amazing.

(keeps moving around)

What is this anyway? Am I in a time warp or something? Have I committed an unpardonable offence? It's true, I'm not married.

(SHELLY looks at him, then back to carrots)

But I'm also not divorced. I have been known to plunge into sinful infatuation with the Alto Saxophone. Sucking on number 5 reeds deep into the wee, wee hours.

SHELLY

Vince, what are you doing that for? They don't care about any of that. They just don't recognize you, that's all.

VINCE

How could they not recognize me! How in the hell could they not recognize me! I'm their son!

DODGE

(watching T.V.)

You're no son of mine. I've had sons in my time and you're not one of 'em.

(Long pause. VINCE stares at DODGE then looks at TILDEN. He turns to SHELLY.)

VINCE

Shelly, I gotta go out for a while. I just gotta go out. I'll get a bottle and I'll come right back. You'll be o'k' here. Really.

SHELLY

I don't know if I can handle this, Vince.

VINCE

I just gotta think or something. I don't know. I gotta put this all together.

SHELLY

Can't we just go?

VINCE

No! I gotta find out what's going on.

SHELLY

Look, you think you're bad off, what about me? Not only don't they recognize me but I've never seen them before in my life. I don't know who these guys are. They could be anybody!

VINCE

They're not anybody!

SHELLY

That's what you say.

VINCE

They're my family for Christ's sake! I should know who my own family is! Now give me a break. It won't take that long. I'll just go out and I'll come right back. Nothing'll happen. I promise.

(SHELLY *stares at him. Pause*)

SHELLY

All right.

VINCE

Thanks.

(*he crosses up to DODGE*)

I'm gonna go out now, Grandpa, and I'll pick you up a bottle. Okay?

DODGE

Change of heart huh?

(*pointing off left*)

Money's on the table. In the kitchen.

(VINCE *moves toward SHELLY.*)

VINCE

(to SHELLY)

You be all right?

SHELLY

(*cutting carrots*)

Sure. I'm fine. I'll just keep real busy while you're gone.

(VINCE *looks at* TILDEN *who keeps staring down at* SHELLY'S *hands.*)

DODGE

Persistence see? That's what it takes. Persistence. Persistence, fortitude and determination. Those are the three virtues. You stick with those three and you can't go wrong.

VINCE

(to TILDEN)

You want anything, Dad?

TILDEN

(*looks up at* VINCE)

Me?

VINCE

From the store? I'm gonna get Grandpa a bottle.

TILDEN

He's not supposed to drink. Halie wouldn't like it.

VINCE

He wants a bottle.

TILDEN

He's not supposed to drink.

DODGE

(to VINCE)

Don't negotiate with him! Don't make any transactions until you've spoken to me first! He'll steal you blind!

VINCE

(to DODGE)

Tilden says you're not supposed to drink.

DODGE

Tilden's lost his marbles! Look at him! He's around the bend. Take a look at him.

(VINCE *stares at* TILDEN. TILDEN *watches* SHELLY'S *hands as she keeps cutting carrots.*)

DODGE

Now look at me. Look here at me!

(VINCE *looks back to* DODGE.)

DODGE

Now, between the two of us, who do you think is more trustworthy? Him or me? Can you trust a man who keeps bringing in vegetables from out of nowhere? Take a look at him.

(VINCE *looks back at* TILDEN.)

SHELLY

Go get the bottle, Vince.

VINCE

(to SHELLY)

You sure you'll be all right?

SHELLY

I'll be fine. I feel right at home now.

VINCE

You do?

SHELLY

I'm fine. Now that I've got the carrots everything is all right.

VINCE

I'll be right back.

(VINCE *crosses stage left.*)

DODGE

Where are you going?

VINCE

I'm going to get the money.

DODGE

Then where are you going?

VINCE

Liquor store.

DODGE

Don't go anyplace else. Don't go off some place and drink. Come right back here.

VINCE

I will.

(VINCE *exits stage left.*)

DODGE

(*calling after* VINCE)

You've got responsibility now! And don't go out the back way either! Come out through this way! I wanna' see you when you leave! Don't go out the back!

VINCE'S VOICE

(*off left*)

I won't!

(DODGE *turns and looks at* TILDEN *and* SHELLY.)

DODGE

Untrustworthy. Probably drown himself if he went out the back. Fall right in a hole. I'd never get my bottle.

SHELLY

I wouldn't worry about Vince. He can take care of himself.

DODGE

Oh he can, huh? Independent.

(VINCE comes on again from stage left with two dollars in his hand. He crosses stage right past DODGE.)

DODGE

(to VINCE)

You got the money?

VINCE

Yeah. Two bucks.

DODGE

Two bucks. Two bucks is two bucks. Don't sneer.

VINCE

What kind do you want?

DODGE

Whiskey! Gold Star Sour Mash. Use your own discretion.

VINCE

Okay.

(VINCE crosses to stage right door. Opens it. Stops when he hears TILDEN.)

TILDEN

(to VINCE)

You drove all the way from New Mexico?

(VINCE turns and looks at TILDEN. They stare at each other. VINCE shakes his head, goes out the door, crosses porch and exits out screen door. TILDEN watches him go. Pause.)

SHELLY

You really don't recognize him? Either one of you?

(TILDEN turns again and stares at SHELLY'S hands as she cuts carrots.)

DODGE

(watching T.V.)

Recognize who?

SHELLY

Vince.

DODGE

What's to recognize?

(DODGE *lights a cigarette, coughs slightly and stares at T.V.*)

SHELLY

It'd be cruel if you recognized him and didn't tell him. Wouldn't be fair.

(DODGE *just stares at T.V., smoking.*)

TILDEN

I thought I recognized him. I thought I recognized something about him.

SHELLY

You did?

TILDEN

I thought I saw a face inside his face.

SHELLY

Well it was probably that you saw what he used to look like. You haven't seen him for six years.

TILDEN

I haven't?

SHELLY

That's what he says.

(TILDEN *moves around in front of her as she continues with carrots.*)

TILDEN

Where was it I saw him last?

SHELLY

I don't know. I've only known him for a few months. He doesn't tell me everything.

TILDEN

He doesn't?

SHELLY

Not stuff like that.

TILDEN

What does he tell you?

SHELLY

You mean in general?

TILDEN

Yeah.

(TILDEN *moves around behind her.*)

SHELLY

Well he tells me all kinds of things.

TILDEN

Like what?

SHELLY

I don't know! I mean I can't just come right out and tell you how he feels.

TILDEN

How come?

(TILDEN *keeps moving around her slowly in a circle.*)

SHELLY

Because it's stuff he told me privately!

TILDEN

And you can't tell me?

SHELLY

I don't even know you!

DODGE

Tilden, go out in the kitchen and make me some coffee! Leave the girl alone.

SHELLY

(to DODGE)

He's all right.

(TILDEN ignores DODGE, keeps moving around SHELLY. He stares at her hair and coat. DODGE stares at T.V.)

TILDEN

You mean you can't tell me anything?

SHELLY

I can tell you some things. I mean we can have a conversation.

TILDEN

We can?

SHELLY

Sure. We're having a conversation right now.

TILDEN

We are?

SHELLY

Yes. That's what we're doing.

TILDEN

But there's certain things you can't tell me, right?

SHELLY

Right.

TILDEN

There's certain things I can't tell you either.

SHELLY

How come?

TILDEN

I don't know. Nobody's supposed to hear it.

SHELLY

Well, you can tell me anything you want to.

TILDEN

I can?

SHELLY

Sure.

TILDEN

It might not be very nice.

SHELLY

That's all right. I've been around.

TILDEN

It might be awful.

SHELLY

Well, can't you tell me anything nice?

(TILDEN stops in front of her and stares at her coat. SHELLY looks back at him. Long pause.)

TILDEN

(after pause)

Can I touch your coat?

SHELLY

My coat?

(she looks at her coat then back to TILDEN)

Sure.

TILDEN

You don't mind?

SHELLY

No. Go ahead.

(SHELLY holds her arm out for TILDEN to touch. DODGE stays fixed on T.V. TILDEN moves in slowly toward SHELLY, staring at her

arm. He reaches out very slowly and touches her arm, feels the fur gently then draws his hand back. SHELLY keeps her arm out.)

SHELLY

It's rabbit.

TILDEN

Rabbit.

(He reaches out again very slowly and touches the fur on her arm then pulls back his hand again. SHELLY drops her arm.)

SHELLY

My arm was getting tired.

TILDEN

Can I hold it?

SHELLY

(pause)

The coat? Sure.

(SHELLY takes off her coat and hands it to TILDEN. TILDEN takes it slowly, feels the fur then puts it on. SHELLY watches as TILDEN strokes the fur slowly. He smiles at her. She goes back to cutting carrots.)

SHELLY

You can have it if you want.

TILDEN

I can?

SHELLY

Yeah. I've got a raincoat in the car. That's all I need.

TILDEN

You've got a car?

SHELLY

Vince does.

(TILDEN walks around stroking the fur and smiling at the coat. SHELLY watches him when he's not looking. DODGE sticks with T`V`, stretches out on sofa wrapped in blanket.)

TILDEN

(*as he walks around*)

I had a car once! I had a white car! I drove. I went everywhere. I went to the mountains. I drove in the snow.

SHELLY

That must've been fun.

TILDEN

(*still moving, feeling coat*)

I drove all day long sometimes. Across the desert. Way out across the desert. I drove past towns. Anywhere. Past palm trees. Lightning. Anything. I would drive through it. I would drive through it and I would stop and I would look around and I would drive on. I would get back in and drive! I loved to drive. There was nothing I loved more. Nothing I dreamed of was better than driving.

DODGE

(*eyes on T V*)

Pipe down would ya'!

(TILDEN *stops. Stares at SHELLY.*)

SHELLY

Do you do much driving now?

TILDEN

Now? Now? I don't drive now.

SHELLY

How come?

TILDEN

I'm grown up now.

SHELLY

Grown up?

TILDEN

I'm not a kid.

SHELLY

You don't have to be a kid to drive.

TILDEN

It wasn't driving then.

SHELLY

What was it?

TILDEN

Adventure. I went everywhere.

SHELLY

Well you can still do that.

TILDEN

Not now.

SHELLY

Why not?

TILDEN

I just told you. You don't understand anything. If I told you something you wouldn't understand it.

SHELLY

Told me what?

TILDEN

Told you something that's true.

SHELLY

Like what?

TILDEN

Like a baby. Like a little tiny baby.

SHELLY

Like when you were little?

TILDEN

If I told you you'd make me give your coat back.

SHELLY

I won't. I promise. Tell me.

TILDEN

I can't. Dodge won't let me.

SHELLY

He won't hear you. It's okay.

(*Pause. TILDEN stares at her. Moves slightly toward her.*)

TILDEN

We had a baby.

(*motioning to DODGE*)

He did. Dodge did. Could pick it up with one hand. Put it in the other. Little baby. Dodge killed it.

(SHELLY *stands.*)

TILDEN

Don't stand up. Don't stand up!

(SHELLY *sits again. DODGE sits up on sofa and looks at them*)

TILDEN

Dodge drowned it.

SHELLY

Don't tell me anymore! Okay?

(TILDEN *moves closer to her. DODGE takes more interest.*)

DODGE

Tilden? You leave that girl alone!

TILDEN

(*pays no attention*)

Never told Halie. Never told anybody. Just drowned it.

DODGE

(*shuts off T.V.*)

Tilden!

TILDEN

Nobody could find it. Just disappeared. Cops looked for it. Neighbors. Nobody could find it.

(DODGE struggles to get up from sofa.)

DODGE

Tilden, what're you telling her! Tilden!

(DODGE keeps struggling until he's standing.)

TILDEN

Finally everybody just gave up. Just stopped looking. Everybody had a different answer. Kidnap. Murder. Accident. Some kind of accident.

(DODGE struggles to walk toward TILDEN and falls. TILDEN ignores him.)

DODGE

Tilden you shut up! You shut up about it!

(DODGE starts coughing on the floor. SHELLY watches him from the stool.)

TILDEN

Little tiny baby just disappeared. It's not hard. It's so small. Almost invisible.

(SHELLY makes a move to help DODGE. TILDEN firmly pushes her back down on the stool. DODGE keeps coughing.)

TILDEN

He said he had his reasons. Said it went a long way back. But he wouldn't tell anybody.

DODGE

Tilden! Don't tell her anything! Don't tell her!

TILDEN

He's the only one who knows where it's buried. The only one. Like a secret buried treasure. Won't tell any of us. Won't tell me or mother or even Bradley. Especially Bradley. Bradley tried to force it out of him but he wouldn't tell. Wouldn't even tell why he did it. One night he just did it.

(DODGE'S coughing subsides. SHELLY stays on stool staring at DODGE. TILDEN slowly takes SHELLY'S coat off and holds it out to her. Long pause. SHELLY sits there trembling.)

TILDEN

You probably want your coat back now.

(SHELLY stares at coat but doesn't move to take it. The sound of BRADLEY'S leg squeaking is heard off left. The others on stage remain still. BRADLEY appears up left outside the screen door wearing a yellow rain slicker. He enters through screen door, crosses porch to stage right door and enters stage. Closes door. Takes off rain slicker

and shakes it out. He sees all the others and stops. TILDEN turns to him. BRADLEY stares at SHELLY. DODGE remains on floor.)

BRADLEY

What's going on here?

(motioning to SHELLY)

Who's that?

(SHELLY stands, moves back away from BRADLEY as he crosses toward her. He stops next to TILDEN. He sees coat in TILDEN'S hand and grabs it away from him.)

BRADLEY

Who's she supposed to be?

TILDEN

She's driving to New Mexico.

(BRADLEY stares at her. SHELLY is frozen. BRADLEY limps over to her with the coat in his fist. He stops in front of her.)

BRADLEY

(to SHELLY, after pause)

Vacation?

(SHELLY shakes her head "no," trembling.)

BRADLEY

(to SHELLY, motioning to TILDEN)

You taking him with you?

(SHELLY shakes her head "no." BRADLEY crosses back to TILDEN.)

BRADLEY

You oughta'. No use leaving him here. Doesn't do a lick a' work. Doesn't raise a finger.

(*stopping, to TILDEN*)

Do ya'?

(*to SHELLY*)

'Course he used to be an All American. Quarterback or Fullback or somethin'. He tell you that?

(SHELLY *shakes her head "no."*)

BRADLEY

Yeah, he used to be a big deal. Wore lettermen's sweaters. Had medals hanging all around his neck. Real purty. Big deal.

(*he laughs to himself, notices DODGE on floor, crosses to him, stops*)

This one too.

(*to SHELLY*)

You'd never think it to look at him would ya'? All bony and wasted away.

(SHELLY *shakes her head again. BRADLEY stares at her, crosses back to her, clenching the coat in his fist. He stops in front of SHELLY.*)

BRADLEY

Women like that kinda' thing don't they?

SHELLY

What?

BRADLEY

Importance. Importance in a man?

SHELLY

I don't know.

BRADLEY

Yeah. You know, you know. Don't give me that.

(*moves closer to SHELLY*)

You're with Tilden?

SHELLY

No.

BRADLEY

(*turning to* TILDEN)

Tilden! She with you?

(TILDEN *doesn't answer. Stares at floor.*)

BRADLEY

Tilden!

(TILDEN *suddenly bolts and runs off up stage left. BRADLEY laughs. Talks to SHELLY. DODGE starts moving his lips silently as though talking to someone invisible on the floor.*)

BRADLEY

(*laughing*)

Scared to death! He was always scared!

(BRADLEY *stops laughing. Stares at SHELLY.*)

BRADLEY

You're scared too, right?

(*laughs again*)

You're scared and you don't even know me.

(*stops laughing*)

You don't gotta be scared.

(SHELLY *looks at DODGE on the floor.*)

SHELLY

Can't we do something for him?

BRADLEY

(*looking at DODGE*)

We could shoot him.

(*laughs*)

We could drown him! What about drowning him?

SHELLY

Shut up!

(BRADLEY *stops laughing. Moves in closer to SHELLY. She freezes. BRADLEY speaks slowly and deliberately.*)

BRADLEY

Hey! Missus. Don't talk to me like that. Don't talk to me in that tone a' voice. There was a time when I had to take that tone a' voice from pretty near everyone.

(*motioning to DODGE*)

Him, for one! Him and that half brain that just ran outa' here. They don't talk to me like that now. Not any more. Everything's turned around now. Full circle. Isn't that funny?

SHELLY

I'm sorry.

BRADLEY

Open your mouth.

SHELLY

What?

BRADLEY

(*motioning for her to open her mouth*)

Open up.

(*She opens her mouth slightly.*)

BRADLEY

Wider.

(*She opens her mouth wider.*)

BRADLEY

Keep it like that.

(*She does. Stares at BRADLEY. With his free hand he puts his fingers into her mouth. She tries to pull away.*)

BRADLEY

Just stay put!

(*She freezes. He keeps his fingers in her mouth. Stares at her. Pause. He pulls his hand out. She closes her mouth, keeps her eyes on him. BRADLEY smiles. He looks at DODGE on the floor and crosses over to him. SHELLY watches him closely. BRADLEY stands over DODGE and smiles at SHELLY. He holds her coat up in both hands over DODGE, keeps smiling at SHELLY. He looks down at DODGE then drops the coat so that it lands on DODGE and covers his head. BRADLEY keeps his hands up in the position of holding the coat, looks over at SHELLY and smiles. The lights black out.*)

Act 3

ACT THREE

SCENE: *Same set. Morning. Bright sun. No sound of rain. Everything has been cleared up again. No sign of carrots. No pail. No stool. VINCE'S saxophone case and overcoat are still at the foot of the staircase. BRADLEY is asleep on the sofa under DODGE'S blanket. His head toward stage left. BRADLEY'S wooden leg is leaning against the sofa right by his head. The shoe is left on it. The harness hangs down. DODGE is sitting on the floor, propped up against the T`V` set facing stage left wearing his baseball cap. SHELLY'S rabbit fur coat covers his chest and shoulders. He stares off toward stage left. He seems weaker and more disoriented. The lights rise slowly to the sound of birds and remain for a while in silence on the two men. BRADLEY sleeps very soundly. DODGE hardly moves. SHELLY appears from stage left with a big smile, slowly crossing toward DODGE balancing a steaming cup of broth in a saucer. DODGE just stares at her as she gets closer to him.*

SHELLY

(*as she crosses*)

This is going to make all the difference in the world, Grandpa. You don't mind me calling you Grandpa do you? I mean I know you minded when Vince called you that but you don't even know him.

DODGE

He skipped town with my money ya' know. I'm gonna hold you as collateral.

SHELLY

He'll be back. Don't you worry.

(*She kneels down next to DODGE and puts the cup and saucer in his lap.*)

DODGE

It's morning already! Not only didn't I get my bottle but he's got my two bucks!

SHELLY

Try to drink this, okay? Don't spill it.

DODGE

What is it?

SHELLY

Beef bouillon. It'll warm you up.

DODGE

Bouillon! I don't want any goddamn bouillon! Get that stuff away from me!

SHELLY

I just got through making it.

DODGE

I don't care if you just spent all week making it! I ain't drinking it!

SHELLY

Well, what am I supposed to do with it then? I'm trying to help you out. Besides, it's good for you.

DODGE

Get it away from me!

(SHELLY stands up with cup and saucer.)

DODGE

What do you know what's good for me anyway?

(She looks at DODGE then turns away from him, crossing to staircase, sits on bottom step and drinks the bouillon. DODGE stares at her.)

DODGE

You know what'd be good for me?

SHELLY

What?

DODGE

A little massage. A little contact.

SHELLY

Oh no. I've had enough contact for a while. Thanks anyway.

(*She keeps sipping bouillon, stays sitting. Pause as DODGE stares at her.*)

DODGE

Why not? You got nothing better to do. That fella's not gonna be back here. You're not expecting him to show up again are you?

SHELLY

Sure. He'll show up. He left his horn here.

DODGE

His horn?

(*laughs*)

You're his horn!

SHELLY

Very funny.

DODGE

He's run off with my money? He's not coming back There.

SHELLY

He'll be back.

DODGE

You're a funny chicken, you know that?

SHELLY

Thanks.

DODGE

Full of faith. Hope. Faith and hope. You're all alike you hoppers. If it's not God then it's a man. If it's not a man then it's a woman. If it's not a woman then it's the land or the future of some kind. Some kind of future.

(*Pause.*)

SHELLY

(*looking toward porch*)

I'm glad it stopped raining.

DODGE

(looks toward porch then back to her)

That's what I mean. See, you're glad it stopped raining. Now you think everything's gonna be different. Just 'cause the sun comes out.

SHELLY

It's already different. Last night I was scared.

DODGE

Scared a' what?

SHELLY

Just scared.

DODGE

Bradley?

(looks at BRADLEY)

He's a push-over. 'Specially now. All ya' gotta' do is take his leg and throw it out the back door. Helpless. Totally helpless.

(SHELLY turns and stares at BRADLEY'S wooden leg then looks at DODGE. She sips bouillon.)

SHELLY

You'd do that?

DODGE

Me? I've hardly got the strength to breathe.

SHELLY

But you'd actually do it if you could?

DODGE

Don't be so easily shocked, girly. There's nothing a man can't do. You dream it up and he can do it. Anything.

SHELLY

You've tried I guess.

DODGE

Don't sit there sippin' your bouillon and judging me! This is my house!

SHELLY

I forgot.

DODGE

You forgot? Whose house did you think it was?

SHELLY

Mine.

(DODGE *just stares at her. Long pause. She sips from cup.*)

SHELLY

I know it's not mine but I had that feeling.

DODGE

What feeling?

SHELLY

The feeling that nobody lives here but me. I mean everybody's gone. You're here, but it doesn't seem like you're supposed to be.

(*pointing to* BRADLEY)

Doesn't seem like he's supposed to be here either. I don't know what it is. It's the house or something. Something familiar. Like I know my way around here. Did you ever get that feeling?

(DODGE *stares at her in silence. Pause.*)

DODGE

No. No, I never did.

(SHELLY *gets up. Moves around space holding cup.*)

SHELLY

Last night I went to sleep up there in that room.

DODGE

What room?

SHELLY

That room up there with all the pictures. All the crosses on the wall.

DODGE

Halie's room?

SHELLY

Yeah. Whoever "Halie" is.

DODGE

She's my wife.

SHELLY

So you remember her?

DODGE

Whad'ya mean! 'Course I remember her! She's only been gone for a day — half a day. However long it's been.

SHELLY

Do you remember her when her hair was bright red? Standing in front of an apple tree?

DODGE

What is this, the third degree or something! Who're you to be askin' me personal questions about my wife!

SHELLY

You never look at those pictures up there?

DODGE

What pictures!

SHELLY

Your whole life's up there hanging on the wall. Somebody who looks just like you. Somebody who looks just like you used to look.

DODGE

That isn't me! That never was me! This is me. Right here. This is it. The whole shootin' match, sittin' right in front of you.

SHELLY

So the past never happened as far as you're concerned?

DODGE

The past? Jesus Christ. The past. What do you know about the past?

SHELLY

Not much. I know there was a farm.

(*Pause*)

DODGE

A farm?

SHELLY

There's a picture of a farm. A big farm. A bull. Wheat. Corn.

DODGE

Corn?

SHELLY

All the kids are standing out in the corn. They're all waving these big straw hats. One of them doesn't have a hat.

DODGE

Which one was that?

SHELLY

There's a baby. A baby in a woman's arms. The same woman with the red hair. She looks lost standing out there. Like she doesn't know how she got there.

DODGE

She knows! I told her a hundred times it wasn't gonna' be the city! I gave her plenty a' warning.

SHELLY

She's looking down at the baby like it was somebody else's. Like it didn't even belong to her.

DODGE

That's about enough outa' you! You got some funny ideas. Some damn funny ideas. You think just because people

propagate they have to love their offspring? You never seen a bitch eat her puppies? Where are you from anyway?

SHELLY

L' A. We already went through that.

DODGE

That's right, L.A. I remember.

SHELLY

Stupid country.

DODGE

That's right! No wonder.

(*Pause.*)

SHELLY

What's happened to this family anyway?

DODGE

You're in no position to ask! What do you care? You some kinda' Social Worker?

SHELLY

I'm Vince's friend.

DODGE

Vince's friend! That's rich. That's really rich. "Vince"! "Mr' Vince"! "Mr' Thief" is more like it! His name doesn't mean a hoot in hell to me. Not a tinkle in the well. You know how many kids I've spawned? Not to mention Grand kids and Great Grand kids and Great Great Grand kids after them?

SHELLY

And you don't remember any of them?

DODGE

What's to remember? Halie's the one with the family album. She's the one you should talk to. She'll set you straight on the heritage if that's what you're interested in. She's traced it all the way back to the grave.

SHELLY

What do you mean?

DODGE

What do you think I mean? How far back can you go? A long line of corpses! There's not a living soul behind me. Not a one. Who's holding me in their memory? Who gives a damn about bones in the ground?

SHELLY

Was Tilden telling the truth?

(DODGE *stops short. Stares at SHELLY. Shakes his head. He looks off stage left.*)

SHELLY

Was he?

(DODGE'S *tone changes drastically.*)

DODGE

Tilden?

(*turns to SHELLY, calmly*)

Where is Tilden?

SHELLY

Last night. Was he telling the truth about the baby?

(*Pause*)

DODGE

(*turns toward stage left*)

What's happened to Tilden? Why isn't Tilden here?

SHELLY

Bradley chased him out.

DODGE

(*looking at BRADLEY asleep*)

Bradley? Why is he on my sofa?

(*turns back to SHELLY*)

Have I been here all night? On the floor?

SHELLY

He wouldn't leave. I hid outside until he fell asleep.

DODGE

Outside? Is Tilden outside? He shouldn't be out there in the rain. He'll get himself into trouble. He doesn't know his way around here anymore. Not like he used to. He went out West and got himself into trouble. Got himself into bad trouble. We don't want any of that around here.

SHELLY

What did he do?

(*Pause.*)

DODGE

(*quietly stares at SHELLY*)

Tilden? He got mixed up. That's what he did. We can't afford to leave him alone. Not now.

(*Sound of HALIE laughing comes from off left. SHELLY stands, looking in direction of voice, holding cup and saucer, doesn't know whether to stay or run.*)

DODGE

(*motioning to SHELLY*)

Sit down! Sit back down!

(SHELLY *sits. Sound of HALIE'S laughter again.*)

DODGE

(*to SHELLY in a heavy whisper, pulling coat up around him*)

Don't leave me alone now! Promise me? Don't go off and leave me alone. I need somebody here with me. Tilden's gone now and I need someone. Don't leave me! Promise!

SHELLY

(*sitting*)

I won't.

(HALIE appears outside the screen porch door, up left with FATHER DEWIS. She is wearing a bright yellow dress, no hat, white gloves and her arms are full of yellow roses. FATHER DEWIS is dressed in traditional black suit, white clerical collar and shirt. He is a very distinguished grey haired man in his sixties. They are both slightly drunk and feeling giddy. As they enter the porch through the screen door, DODGE pulls the rabbit fur coat over his head and hides. SHELLY stands again. DODGE drops the coat and whispers intensely to SHELLY. Neither HALIE nor FATHER DEWIS are aware of the people inside the house.)

DODGE

(*to SHELLY in a strong whisper*)

You promised!

(SHELLY *sits on stairs again. DODGE pulls coat back over his head. HALIE and FATHER DEWIS talk on the porch as they cross toward stage right interior door.*)

HALIE

Oh Father! That's terrible! That's absolutely terrible. Aren't you afraid of being punished?

(*She giggles*)

FATHER DEWIS

Not by the Italians. They're too busy punishing each other.

(*They both break out in giggles.*)

HALIE

What about God?

FATHER DEWIS

Well, prayerfully, God only hears what he wants to. That's just between you and me of course. In our heart of hearts we know we're every bit as wicked as the Catholics.

(*They giggle again and reach the stage right door.*)

HALIE

Father, I never heard you talk like this in Sunday sermon.

FATHER DEWIS

Well, I save all my best jokes for private company. Pearls before swine you know.

(*They enter the room laughing and stop when they see SHELLY. SHELLY stands. HALIE closes the door behind FATHER DEWIS. DODGE'S voice is heard under the coat, talking to SHELLY.*)

DODGE

(*under coat, to SHELLY*)

Sit down, sit down! Don't let 'em buffalo you!

(*SHELLY sits on stair again. HALIE looks at DODGE on the floor then looks at BRADLEY asleep on sofa and sees his wooden leg. She lets out a shriek of embarrassment for FATHER DEWIS.*)

HALIE

Oh my gracious! What in the name of Judas Priest is going on in this house!

(*She hands over the roses to FATHER DEWIS.*)

HALIE

Excuse me Father.

(HALIE crosses to DODGE, whips the coat off him and covers the wooden leg with it. BRADLEY stays asleep.)

HALIE

You can't leave this house for a second without the Devil blowing in through the front door!

DODGE

Gimme back that coat! Gimme back that goddamn coat before I freeze to death!

HALIE

You're not going to freeze! The sun's out in case you hadn't noticed!

DODGE

Gimme back that coat! That coat's for live flesh not dead wood!

(HALIE whips the blanket off BRADLEY and throws it on DODGE. DODGE covers his head again with blanket. BRADLEY'S amputated leg can be faked by having half of it under a cushion of the sofa. He's fully clothed. BRADLEY sits up with a jerk when the blanket comes off him.)

HALIE

(as she tosses blanket)

Here! Use this! It's yours anyway! Can't you take care of yourself for once!

BRADLEY

(yelling at HALIE)

Gimme that blanket! Gimme back that blanket! That's my blanket!

(HALIE crosses back toward FATHER DEWIS who just stands there with the roses. BRADLEY thrashes helplessly on the sofa trying to reach blanket. DODGE hides himself deeper in blanket. SHELLY looks on from staircase, still holding cup and saucer.)

HALIE

Believe me, Father, this is not what I had in mind when I invited you in.

FATHER DEWIS

Oh, no apologies please. I wouldn't be in the ministry if I couldn't face real life.

(He laughs self-consciously. HALIE notices SHELLY again and crosses over to her. SHELLY stays sitting. HALIE stops and stares at her.)

BRADLEY

I want my blanket back! Gimme my blanket!

(HALIE turns toward BRADLEY and silences him.)

HALIE

Shut up, Bradley! Right this minute! I've had enough!

(BRADLEY slowly recoils, lies back down on sofa, turns his back toward HALIE and whimpers softly. HALIE directs her attention to SHELLY again. Pause.)

HALIE

(to SHELLY)

What're you doing with my cup and saucer?

SHELLY

(looking at cup, back to HALIE)

I made some bouillon for Dodge.

HALIE

For Dodge?

SHELLY

Yeah.

HALIE

Well, did he drink it?

SHELLY

No.

HALIE

Did you drink it?

SHELLY

Yes.

(HALIE *stares at her. Long pause. She turns abruptly away from SHELLY and crosses back to FATHER DEWIS.*)

HALIE

Father, there's a stranger in my house. What would you advise? What would be the Christian thing?

FATHER DEWIS

(*squirming*)

Oh, well.... I.... I really —

HALIE

We still have some whiskey, don't we?

(DODGE *slowly pulls the blanket down off his head and looks toward FATHER DEWIS. SHELLY stands.*)

SHELLY

Listen, I don't drink or anything. I just —

(HALIE *turns toward SHELLY viciously.*)

HALIE

You sit back down!

(SHELLY *sits again on stair. HALIE turns again to DEWIS.*)

HALIE

I think we have plenty of whiskey left! Don't we Father?

FATHER DEWIS

Well, yes. I think so. You'll have to get it. My hands are full.

(HALIE *giggles. Reaches into DEWIS'S pockets, searching for bottle. She smells the roses as she searches. DEWIS stands stiffly. DODGE watches HALIE closely as she looks for bottle.*)

HALIE

The most incredible things, roses! Aren't they incredible, Father?

FATHER DEWIS

Yes. Yes they are.

HALIE

They almost cover the stench of sin in this house. Just magnificent! The smell. We'll have to put some at the foot of Ansel's statue. On the day of the unveiling.

(HALIE finds a silver flask of whiskey in DEWIS'S vest pocket. She pulls it out. DODGE looks on eagerly. HALIE crosses to DODGE, opens the flask and takes a sip.)

HALIE

(to DODGE)

Ansel's getting a statue, Dodge. Did you know that? Not a plaque but a real live statue. A full bronze. Tip to toe. A basketball in one hand and a rifle in the other.

BRADLEY

(his back to HALIE)

He never played basketball!

HALIE

You shut up, Bradley! You shut up about Ansel! Ansel played basketball better than anyone! And you know it! He was an All American! There's no reason to take the glory away from others.

(HALIE turns away from BRADLEY, crosses back toward DEWIS sipping on the flask and smiling.)

HALIE

(to DEWIS)

Ansel was a great basketball player. One of the greatest.

FATHER DEWIS

I remember Ansel.

HALIE

Of course! You remember. You remember how he could play.

(she turns toward SHELLY)

Of course, nowadays they play a different brand of basketball. More vicious. Isn't that right, dear?

SHELLY

I don't know.

(HALIE crosses to SHELLY, sipping on flask. She stops in front of SHELLY.)

HALIE

Much, much more vicious. They smash into each other. They knock each other's teeth out. There's blood all over the court. Savages.

(HALIE takes the cup from SHELLY and pours whiskey into it.)

HALIE

They don't train like they used to. Not at all. They allow themselves to run amuck. Drugs and women. Women mostly.

(HALIE hands the cup of whiskey back to SHELLY slowly. SHELLY takes it.)

HALIE

Mostly women. Girls. Sad, pathetic little girls.

(she crosses back to FATHER DEWIS)

It's just a reflection of the times, don't you think Father? An indication of where we stand?

FATHER DEWIS

I suppose so, yes.

HALIE

Yes. A sort of a bad omen. Our youth becoming monsters.

FATHER DEWIS

Well, I uh —

HALIE

Oh you can disagree with me if you want to, Father. I'm open to debate. I think argument only enriches both sides of the question don't you?

(she moves toward DODGE)

I suppose, in the long run, it doesn't matter. When you see the way things deteriorate before your very eyes. Everything running down hill. It's kind of silly to even think about youth.

FATHER DEWIS

No, I don't think so. I think it's important to believe in certain things.

HALIE

Yes. Yes, I know what you mean. I think that's right. I think that's true.

(*she looks at DODGE*)

Certain basic things. We can't shake certain basic things. We might end up crazy. Like my husband. You can see it in his eyes. You can see how mad he is.

(DODGE *covers his head with the blanket again. HALIE takes a single rose from DEWIS and moves slowly over to DODGE.*)

HALIE

We can't not believe in something. We can't stop believing. We just end up dying if we stop. Just end up dead.

(HALIE *throws the rose gently onto DODGE'S blanket. It lands between his knees and stays there. Long pause as HALIE stares at the rose. SHELLY stands suddenly. HALIE doesn't turn to her but keeps staring at rose.*)

SHELLY

(*to HALIE*)

Don't you wanna' know who I am! Don't you wanna know what I'm doing here! I'm not dead!

(SHELLY *crosses toward HALIE. HALIE turns slowly toward her.*)

HALIE

Did you drink your whiskey?

SHELLY

No! And I'm not going to either!

HALIE

Well that's a firm stand. It's good to have a firm stand.

SHELLY

I don't have any stand at all. I'm just trying to put all this together.

(HALIE *laughs and crosses back to DEWIS.*)

HALIE

(*to DEWIS*)

Surprises, surprises! Did you have any idea we'd be returning to this?

SHELLY

I came here with your Grandson for a little visit! A little innocent friendly visit.

HALIE

My Grandson?

SHELLY

Yes! That's right. The one no one remembers.

HALIE

(*to DEWIS*)

This is getting a little far fetched.

SHELLY

I told him it was stupid to come back here. To try to pick up from where he left off.

HALIE

Where was that?

SHELLY

Wherever he was when he left here! Six years ago! Ten years ago! Whenever it was. I told him nobody cares.

HALIE

Didn't he listen?

SHELLY

No! No he didn't. We had to stop off at every tiny little meatball town that he remembered from his boyhood! Every stupid little donut shop he ever kissed a girl in. Every Drive-In. Every Drag Strip. Every football field he ever broke a bone on.

HALIE

(*suddenly alarmed, to DODGE*)

Where's Tilden?

SHELLY

Don't ignore me!

HALIE

DODGE! Where's Tilden gone?

(*SHELLY moves violently toward HALIE.*)

SHELLY

(to HALIE)

I'm talking to you!

(BRADLEY *sits up fast on the sofa*, SHELLY *backs away*.)

BRADLEY

(to SHELLY)

Don't you yell at my mother!

HALIE

Dodge!

(*she kicks* DODGE)

I told you not to let Tilden out of your sight! Where's he gone to?

DODGE

Gimme a drink and I'll yell ya'.

FATHER DEWIS

Halie, maybe this isn't the right time for a visit.

(HALIE *crosses back to* DEWIS.)

HALIE

(to DEWIS)

I never should've left. I never, never should've left! Tilden could be anywhere by now! Anywhere! He's not in control of his faculties. Dodge knew that. I told him when I left here. I told him specifically to watch out for Tilden.

(BRADLEY *reaches down, grabs DODGE'S blanket and yanks it off him. He lays down on sofa and pulls the blanket over his head*.)

DODGE

He's got my blanket again! He's got my blanket!

HALIE

(*turning to* BRADLEY)

Bradley! Bradley, put that blanket back!

(HALIE moves toward BRADLEY. SHELLY suddenly throws the cup and saucer against the stage right door. DEWIS ducks. The cup and saucer smash into pieces. HALIE stops, turns toward SHELLY. Everyone freezes. BRADLEY slowly pulls his head out from under blanket, looks toward stage right door, then to SHELLY. SHELLY stares at HALIE. DEWIS cowers with roses. SHELLY moves slowly toward HALIE. Long pause. SHELLY speaks softly.)

SHELLY

(to HALIE)

I don't like being ignored. I don't like being

treated like I'm not here. I didn't like it when I was a kid and I still don't like it.

BRADLEY

(sitting up on sofa)

We don't have to tell you anything, girl. Not a thing. You're not the police are you? You're not the government. You're just some prostitute that Tilden brought in here.

HALIE

Language! I won't have that language in my house!

SHELLY

(to BRADLEY)

You stuck your hand in my mouth and you call me a prostitute!

HALIE

Bradley! Did you put your hand in her mouth? I'm ashamed of you. I can't leave you alone for a minute.

BRADLEY

I never did. She's lying!

FATHER DEWIS

Halie, I think I'll be running along now. I'll just put the roses in the kitchen.

(DEWIS moves toward stage left. HALIE stops him.)

HALIE

Don't go now, Father! Not now.

BRADLEY

I never did anything, mom! I never touched her! She propositioned me! And I turned her down. I turned her down flat!

(SHELLY suddenly grabs her coat off the wooden leg and takes both the leg and coat down stage, away from BRADLEY.)

BRADLEY

Mom! Mom! She's got my leg! She's taken my leg! I never did anything to her! She's stolen my leg!

(BRADLEY reaches pathetically in the air for his leg. SHELLY sets it down for a second, puts on her coat fast and picks the leg up again. DODGE starts coughing softly.)

HALIE

(to SHELLY)

I think we've had about enough of you young lady. Just about enough. I don't know where you came from or what you're doing here but you're no longer welcome in this house.

SHELLY

(laughs, holds leg)

No longer welcome!

BRADLEY

Mom! That's my leg! Get my leg back! I can't do anything without my leg.

(BRADLEY keeps making whimpering sounds and reaching for his leg.)

HALIE

Give my son back his leg. Right this very minute!

(DODGE starts laughing softly to himself in between coughs.)

HALIE

(to DEWIS)

Father, do something about this would you! I'm not about to be terrorized in my own house!

BRADLEY

Gimme back my leg!

HALIE

Oh, shut up Bradley! Just shut up! You don't need your leg now! Just lay down and shut up!

(BRADLEY whimpers. Lays down and pulls blanket around him. He keeps one arm outside blanket, reaching out toward his wooden leg. DEWIS cautiously approaches SHELLY with the roses in his arms. SHELLY clutches the wooden leg to her chest as though she's kidnapped it.)

FATHER DEWIS

(to SHELLY)

Now, honestly dear, wouldn't it be better to try to talk things out? To try to use some reason?

SHELLY

There isn't any reason here! I can't find a reason for anything.

FATHER DEWIS

There's nothing to be afraid of. These are all good people. All righteous people.

SHELLY

I'm not afraid!

FATHER DEWIS

But this isn't your house. You have to have some respect.

SHELLY

You're the strangers here, not me.

HALIE

This has gone far enough!

FATHER DEWIS

Halie, please. Let me handle this.

SHELLY

Don't come near me! Don't anyone come near me. I don't need any words from you. I'm not threatening anybody. I don't even know what I'm doing here. You all say you don't remember Vince, okay, maybe you don't. Maybe it's Vince that's crazy. Maybe he's made this whole family thing up. I don't even care anymore. I was just coming along for the ride. I thought it'd be a nice gesture. Besides, I was curious. He made all of you sound familiar to me. Every one of you. For every name, I had an image. Every time he'd tell me a name, I'd see the person. In fact, each of you was so clear in my mind that I actually believed it was you. I really believed when I walked through that door that the people who lived here would turn out to be the same people in my imagination. But I don't recognize any of you. Not one. Not even the slightest resemblance.

FATHER DEWIS

Well you can hardly blame others for not fulfilling your hallucination.

SHELLY

It was no hallucination! It was more like a prophecy. You believe in prophecy, don't you?

HALIE

Father, there's no point in talking to her any further. We're just going to have to call the police.

BRADLEY

No! Don't get the police in here. We don't want the police in here. This is our home.

SHELLY

That's right. Bradley's right. Don't you usually settle your affairs in private? Don't you usually take them out in the dark? Out in the back?

BRADLEY

You stay out of our lives! You have no business interfering!

SHELLY

I don't have any business period. I got nothing to lose.

(*She moves around, staring at each of them.*)

BRADLEY

You don't know what we've been through. You don't know anything!

SHELLY

I know you've got a secret. You've all got a secret. It's so secret in fact, you're all convinced it never happened.

(HALIE *moves to* DEWIS)

HALIE

Oh, my God, Father!

DODGE

(*laughing to himself*)

She thinks she's going to get it out of us. She thinks she's going to uncover the truth of the matter. Like a detective or something.

BRADLEY

I'm not telling her anything! Nothing's wrong here! Nothing's ever been wrong! Everything's the way it's

supposed to be! Nothing ever happened that's bad! Everything is all right here! We're all good people!

DODGE

She thinks she's gonna suddenly bring everything out into the open after all these years.

FATHER DEWIS

(to SHELLY)

Can't you see that these people want to be left in peace? Don't you have any mercy? They haven't done anything to you.

DODGE

She wants to get to the bottom of it.

(to SHELLY)

That's it, isn't it? You'd like to get right down to bedrock? You want me to tell ya'? You want me to tell ya' what happened? I'll tell ya'. I might as well.

BRADLEY

No! Don't listen to him. He doesn't remember anything!

DODGE

I remember the whole thing from start to finish. I remember the day he was born.

(pause)

HALIE

Dodge, if you tell this thing — if you tell this, you'll be dead to me. You'll be just as good as dead.

DODGE

That won't be such a big change, Halie. See this girl, this girl here, she wants to know. She wants to know something more. And I got this feeling that it doesn't make a bit a' difference. I'd sooner tell it to a stranger than anybody else.

BRADLEY

(to DODGE)

We made a pact! We made a pact between us! You can't break that now!

DODGE

I don't remember any pact.

BRADLEY

(to SHELLY)

See, he doesn't remember anything. I'm the only one in the family who remembers. The only one. And I'll never tell you!

SHELLY

I'm not so sure I want to find out now.

DODGE

(*laughing to himself*)

Listen to her! Now she's runnin' scared!

SHELLY

I'm not scared!

(DODGE *stops laughing, long pause. DODGE stares at her.*)

DODGE

You're not huh? Well, that's good. Because I'm not either. See, we were a well established family once. Well established. All the boys were grown. The farm was producing enough milk to fill Lake Michigan twice over. Me and Halie here were pointed toward what looked like the middle part of our life. Everything was settled with us. All we had to do was ride it out. Then Halie got pregnant again. Outa' the middle a' nowhere, she got pregnant. We weren't planning on havin' any more boys. We had enough boys already. In fact, we hadn't been sleepin' in the same bed for about six years.

HALIE

(*moving toward stairs*)

I'm not listening to this! I don't have to listen to this!

DODGE

(*stops HALIE*)

Where are you going! Upstairs! You'll just be listenin' to it upstairs! You go outside, you'll be listenin' to it outside. Might as well stay here and listen to it.

(HALIE *stays by stairs*)

BRADLEY

If I had my leg you wouldn't be saying this. You'd never get away with it if I had my leg.

DODGE

(*pointing to SHELLY*)

She's got your leg.

(*laughs*)

She's gonna keep your leg too.

(*to SHELLY*)

She wants to hear this. Don't you?

SHELLY

I don't know.

DODGE

Well even if ya' don't I'm gonna' tell ya'.

(*pause*)

Halie had this kid. This baby boy. She had it. I let her have it on her own. All the other boys I had had the best doctors, best nurses, everything. This one I let her have by herself. This one hurt real bad. Almost killed her, but she had it anyway. It lived, see. It lived. It wanted to grow up in this family. It wanted to be just like us. It wanted to be a part of us. It wanted to pretend that I was its father. She wanted me to believe in it. Even when everyone around us knew. Everyone. All our boys knew. Tilden knew.

HALIE

You shut up! Bradley, make him shut up!

BRADLEY

I can't.

DODGE

Tilden was the one who knew. Better than any of us. He'd walk for miles with that kid in his arms. Halie let him take it. All night sometimes. He'd walk all night out there in the pasture with it. Talkin' to it. Singin' to it. Used to hear him singing to it. He'd make up stories. He'd tell that kid all kinds a' stories. Even when he knew it couldn't understand him. Couldn't understand a word he was sayin'. Never would understand him. We couldn't let a thing like that continue. We couldn't allow that to grow up right in the middle of our lives. It made everything we'd accomplished look like it was nothin'. Everything was cancelled out by this one mistake. This one weakness.

SHELLY

So you killed him?

DODGE

I killed it. I drowned it. Just like the runt of a litter. Just drowned it.

(HALIE *moves toward* BRADLEY)

HALIE

(to BRADLEY)

Ansel would've stopped him! Ansel would've stopped him from telling these lies! He was a hero! A man! A whole man! What's happened to the men in this family! Where are the men!

(Suddenly VINCE comes crashing through the screen porch door up left, tearing it off its hinges. Everyone but DODGE and BRADLEY back away from the porch and stare at VINCE who has landed on his stomach on the porch in a drunken stupor. He is singing loudly to himself and hauls himself slowly to his feet. He has a paper shopping bag full of empty booze bottles. He takes them out one at a time as he sings and smashes them at the opposite end of the porch, behind the solid interior door, stage right. SHELLY moves slowly toward stage right, holding wooden leg and watching VINCE.)

VINCE

(singing loudly as he hurls bottles)

"From the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli. We will fight our country's battles on the land and on the sea."

(He punctuates the words "Montezuma," "Tripoli," "battles" and "sea" with a smashed bottle each. He stops throwing for a second, stares toward stage right of the porch, shades his eyes with his hand as though looking across to a battle field, then cups his hands around his mouth and yells across the space of the porch to an imaginary army. The others watch in terror and expectation.)

VINCE

(to imagined Army)

Have you had enough over there! 'Cause there's a lot more here where that came from!

(pointing to paper bag full of bottles)

A helluva lot more! We got enough over here to blow ya' from here to Kingdomcome!

(He takes another bottle, makes high whistling sound of a bomb and throws it toward stage right porch. Sound of bottle smashing against wall. This should be the actual smashing of bottles and not tape sound. He keeps yelling and heaving bottles one after another. VINCE stops for a while, breathing heavily from exhaustion. Long silence as the others watch him. SHELLY approaches tentatively in VINCE'S direction, still holding BRADLEY'S wooden leg.)

SHELLY

(after silence)

Vince?

(VINCE turns toward her. Peers through screen.)

VINCE

Who? What? Vince who? Who's that in there?

(VINCE *pushes his face against the screen from the porch and stares in at everyone.*)

DODGE

Where's my goddamn bottle!

VINCE

(*looking in at DODGE*)

What? Who is that?

DODGE

It's me! Your Grandfather! Don't play stupid with me! Where's my two bucks!

VINCE

Your two bucks?

(HALIE *moves away from DEWIS, upstage, peers out at VINCE, trying to recognize him.*)

HALIE

Vincent? Is that you, Vincent?

(SHELLY *stares at HALIE then looks out at VINCE.*)

VINCE

(*from porch*)

Vincent who? What is this! Who are you people?

SHELLY

(*to HALIE*)

Hey, wait a minute. Wait a minute! What's going on?

HALIE

(*moving closer to porch screen*)

We thought you were a murderer or something. Barging in through the door like that.

VINCE

I am a murderer! Don't underestimate me for a minute! I'm the Midnight Strangler! I devour whole families in a single gulp!

(VINCE *grabs another bottle and smashes it on the porch. HALIE backs away.*)

SHELLY

(*approaching Halie*)

You mean you know who he is?

HALIE

Of course I know who he is! That's more than I can say for you.

BRADLEY

(*sitting up on sofa*)

You get off our front porch you creep! What're you doing out there breaking bottles? Who are these foreigners anyway! Where did they come from?

VINCE

Maybe I should come in there and break them!

HALIE

(*moving toward porch*)

Don't you dare! Vincent, what's got into you! Why are you acting like this?

VINCE

Maybe I should come in there and usurp your territory!

(HALIE *turns back toward DEWIS and crosses to him.*)

HALIE

(*to DEWIS*)

Father, why are you just standing around here when everything's falling apart? Can't you rectify this situation?

(DODGE *laughs, coughs.*)

FATHER DEWIS

I'm just a guest here, Halie. I don't know what my position is exactly. This is outside my parish anyway.

(VINCE *starts throwing more bottles as things continue.*)

BRADLEY

If I had my leg I'd rectify it! I'd rectify him all over the goddamn highway! I'd pull his ears out if I could reach him!

(BRADLEY sticks his fist through the screening of the porch and reaches out for VINCE, grabbing at him and missing. VINCE jumps away from BRADLEY'S hand.)

VINCE

Aaaah! Our lines have been penetrated! Tentacled animals! Beasts from the deep!

(VINCE strikes out at BRADLEY'S hand with a bottle. BRADLEY pulls his hand back inside.)

SHELLY

Vince! Knock it off will ya!! I want to get out of here!

(VINCE pushes his face against screen, looks in at SHELLY.)

VINCE

(to SHELLY)

Have they got you prisoner in there, dear? Such a sweet young thing too. All her life in front of her. Nipped in the bud.

SHELLY

I'm coming out there, Vince! I'm coming out there and I want us to get in the car and drive away from here. Anywhere. Just away from here.

(SHELLY moves toward VINCE'S saxophone case and overcoat. She sets down the wooden leg, downstage left and picks up the saxophone case and overcoat. VINCE watches her through the screen.)

VINCE

(to SHELLY)

We'll have to negotiate. Make some kind of a deal. Prisoner exchange or something. A few of theirs for one of ours. Small price to pay if you ask me.

(SHELLY crosses toward stage right door with overcoat and case.)

SHELLY

Just go and get the car! I'm coming out there now. We're going to leave.

VINCE

Don't come out here! Don't you dare come out here!

(SHELLY stops short of the door, stage right.)

SHELLY

How come?

VINCE

Off limits! Verboten! This is taboo territory. No man or woman has ever crossed the line and lived to tell the tale!

SHELLY

I'll take my chances.

(SHELLY moves to stage right door and opens it. VINCE pulls out a big folding hunting knife and pulls open the blade. He jabs the blade into the screen and starts cutting a hole big enough to climb through. BRADLEY cowers in a corner of the sofa as VINCE rips at the screen.)

VINCE

(as he cuts screen)

Don't come out here! I'm warning you! You'll disintegrate!

(DEWIS takes HALIE by the arm and pulls her toward staircase.)

FATHER DEWIS

Halie, maybe we should go upstairs until this blows over.

HALIE

I don't understand it. I just don't understand it. He was the sweetest little boy!

(DEWIS drops the roses beside the wooden leg at the foot of the staircase then escorts HALIE quickly up the stairs. HALIE keeps looking back at VINCE as they climb the stairs.)

HALIE

There wasn't a mean bone in his body. Everyone loved Vincent. Everyone. He was the perfect baby.

FATHER DEWIS

He'll be all right after a while. He's just had a few too many that's all.

HALIE

He used to sing in his sleep. He'd sing. In the middle of the night. The sweetest voice. Like an angel.

(she stops for a moment)

I used to lie awake listening to it. I used to lie awake thinking it was all right if I died. Because Vincent was an angel. A guardian angel. He'd watch over us. He'd watch over all of us.

(DEWIS takes her all the way up the stairs. They disappear above. VINCE is now climbing through the porch screen onto the sofa. BRADLEY crashes off the sofa, holding tight to his blanket, keeping it wrapped around him. SHELLY is outside on the porch. VINCE holds the knife in his teeth once he gets the hole wide enough to climb through. BRADLEY starts crawling slowly toward his wooden leg, reaching out for it.)

DODGE

(to VINCE)

Go ahead! Take over the house! Take over the whole goddamn house! You can have it! It's yours. It's been a pain in the neck ever since the very first mortgage. I'm gonna die any second now. Any second. You won't even notice. So I'll settle my affairs once and for all.

(As DODGE proclaims his last will and testament, VINCE climbs into the room, knife in mouth, and strides slowly around the space, inspecting his inheritance. He casually notices BRADLEY as he crawls toward his leg. VINCE moves to the leg and keeps pushing it with his foot so that it's out of BRADLEY'S reach then goes on with his

inspection. He picks up the roses and carries them around smelling them. SHELLY can be seen outside on the porch, moving slowly center and staring in at VINCE. VINCE ignores her.)

DODGE

The house goes to my Grandson, Vincent. All the furnishings, accoutrements and paraphernalia therein. Everything tacked to the walls or otherwise resting under this roof. My tools — namely my band saw, my skill saw, my drill press, my chain saw, my lathe, my electric sander, all go to my eldest son, Tilden. That is, if he ever shows up again. My shed and gasoline powered equipment, namely my tractor, my dozer, my hand tiller plus all the attachments and riggings for the above mentioned machinery, namely my spring tooth harrow, my deep plows, my disk plows, my automatic fertilizing equipment, my reaper, my swathe, my seeder, my John Deere Harvester, my post hole digger, my jackhammer, my lathe —

(to himself)

Did I mention my lathe? I already mentioned my lathe — my Bennie Goodman records, my harnesses, my bits, my halters, my brace, my rough rasp, my forge, my welding equipment, my shoeing nails, my levels and bevels, my milking stool — no, not my milking stool — my hammers and chisels, my hinges, my cattle gates, my barbed wire, self-tapping augers, my horse hair ropes and all related materials are to be pushed into a gigantic heap and set ablaze in the very center of my fields. When the blaze is at its highest, preferably on a cold, windless night, my body is to be pitched into the middle of it and burned til nothing remains but ash.

(Pause. VINCE takes the knife out of his mouth and smells the roses. He's facing toward audience and doesn't turn around to SHELLY. He folds up knife and pockets it.)

SHELLY

(from porch)

I'm leaving, Vince. Whether you come or not, I'm leaving.

VINCE

(*smelling roses*)

Just put my horn on the couch there before you take off.

SHELLY

(*moving toward hole in screen*)

You're not coming?

(VINCE *stays downstage, turns and looks at her.*)

VINCE

I just inherited a house.

SHELLY

(*through hole, from porch*)

You want to stay here?

VINCE

(*as he pushes BRADLEY'S leg out of reach*)

I've gotta carry on the line. I've gotta see to it that things keep rolling.

(BRADLEY *looks up at him from floor, keeps pulling himself toward his leg. VINCE keeps moving it.*)

SHELLY

What happened to you Vince? You just disappeared.

VINCE

(*pause, delivers speech front*)

I was gonna run last night. I was gonna run and keep right on running. I drove all night. Clear to the Iowa border. The old man's two bucks sitting right on the seat beside me. It never stopped raining the whole time. Never stopped once. I could see myself in the windshield. My face. My eyes. I studied my face. Studied everything about it. As though I was looking at another man. As though I could see his whole race behind him. Like a mummy's face. I saw him dead and alive at the same time. In the same breath. In the windshield, I watched him breathe as though he was frozen in time. And every breath marked him. Marked him forever without him knowing. And then his face changed. His face became his father's face. Same bones. Same eyes. Same nose. Same breath. And his father's face changed to his Grandfather's face. And it went on like that. Changing. Clear on back to faces I'd never seen before but still recognized. Still recognized the bones underneath. The eyes. The breath. The mouth. I followed my family clear into Iowa. Every last one. Straight

into the Corn Belt and further. Straight back as far as they'd take me. Then it all dissolved. Everything dissolved.

(SHELLY stares at him for a while then reaches through the hole in the screen and sets the saxophone case and VINCE'S overcoat on the sofa. She looks at VINCE again.)

SHELLY

Bye Vince.

(She exits left off the porch. VINCE watches her go. BRADLEY tries to make a lunge for his wooden leg. VINCE quickly picks it up and dangles it over BRADLEY'S head like a carrot. BRADLEY keeps making desperate grabs at the leg. DEWIS comes down the staircase and stops half way, staring at VINCE and BRADLEY. VINCE looks up at DEWIS and smiles. He keeps moving backwards with the leg toward upstage left as BRADLEY crawls after him.)

VINCE

(to DEWIS as he continues torturing BRADLEY)

Oh, excuse

me Father. Just getting rid of some of the vermin in the house. This is my house now, ya' know? All mine. Everything. Except for the power tools and stuff. I'm gonna get all new equipment anyway. New plows, new tractor, everything. All brand new.

(VINCE teases BRADLEY closer to the up left corner of the stage.)

Start right off on the ground floor.

(VINCE throws BRADLEY'S wooden leg far off stage left. BRADLEY follows his leg off stage, pulling himself along on the ground, whimpering. As BRADLEY exits VINCE pulls the blanket off him and throws it over his own shoulder. He crosses toward DEWIS with the blanket and smells the roses. DEWIS comes to the bottom of the stairs.)

FATHER DEWIS

You'd better go up and see your Grandmother.

VINCE

(looking up stairs, back to DEWIS)

My Grandmother? There's nobody else in this house. Except for you. And you're leaving aren't you?

(DEWIS crosses toward stage right door. He turns back to VINCE.)

FATHER DEWIS

She's going to need someone. I can't help her. I don't know what to do. I don't know what my position is. I

just came in for some tea. I had no idea there was any trouble. No idea at all.

(VINCE just stares at him. DEWIS goes out the door, crosses porch and exits left. VINCE listens to him leaving. He smells roses, looks up the staircase then smells roses again. He turns and looks upstage at DODGE. He crosses up to him and bends over looking at DODGE'S open eyes. DODGE is dead. His death should have come completely unnoticed. Vince lifts the blanket, then covers his head. He sits on the sofa, smelling roses and staring at DODGE'S body. Long pause. VINCE places the roses on DODGE'S chest then lays down on the sofa, arms folded behind his head, staring at the ceiling. His body is in the same relationship to DODGE'S. After a while HALIE'S voice is heard coming from above the staircase. The lights start to dim almost imperceptibly as HALIE speaks. VINCE keeps staring at the ceiling.)

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge? Is that you Dodge? Tilden was right about the corn you know. I've never seen such corn. Have you taken a look at it lately? Tall as a man already. This early in the year. Carrots too. Potatoes. Peas. It's like a paradise out there, Dodge. You oughta' take a look. A miracle. I've

never seen it like this. Maybe the rain did something. Maybe it was the rain.

(As HALIE keeps talking off stage, TILDEN appears from stage left, dripping with mud from the knees down. His arms and hands are covered with mud. In his hands he carries the corpse of a small child at chest level, staring down at it. The corpse mainly consists of bones wrapped in muddy, rotten cloth. He moves slowly downstage toward the staircase, ignoring VINCE on the sofa. VINCE keeps staring at the ceiling as though TILDEN wasn't there. As HALIE'S VOICE continues, TILDEN slowly makes his way up the stairs. His eyes never leave the corpse of the child. The lights keep fading.)

HALIE'S VOICE

Good hard rain. Takes everything straight down deep to the roots. The rest takes care of itself. You can't force a thing to grow. You can't interfere with it. It's all hidden. It's all unseen. You just gotta wait til it pops up out of the ground. Tiny little shoot. Tiny little white shoot. All hairy and fragile. Strong though. Strong enough to break the earth even. It's a miracle, Dodge. I've never seen a crop like this in my whole life. Maybe it's the sun. Maybe that's it. Maybe it's the sun.

(TILDEN disappears above. Silence. Lights go to black.)